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WITH CRASH AND THE GANG

LEGEND OF MANA, SLAVE ZERO, SPROCKET, SUIKODEN 2,
SONIC ADVENTURE, TNN HARDCORE HEAT, TOY COMMANDER, EWJ 3D

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Gamers' Republic MANIFESTO

As we put this issue to bed, and with the Dreamcast launch just three weeks away, we've already had our first marked event of questionable censorship in a game. A sign of the times, I suppose, people are as uptight as ever, letting the TV news seep into their lives and consequently our video games. I have always had a problem with this, unless, of course, it's founded, although I can't recollect a single time when it was. Imagine there was a TV news program that just reported the great things that people did every day—even us evil video game players. Try to imagine the number of events that would be covered daily. If, let's say, 25 people that play games did something really good, like helped a guy with a flat tire or told the buck-toothed checker that she was a babe, I wonder if the result would be reports that video games make people better? Yeah, and the Jaguar's going to make a huge comeback.

But you catch my drift. The news is what it is these days (it wasn't always like this according to my parents) because it makes miserable people's lives seem better. So, you're unemployed and down to your last box of Macaroni and Cheese, and the guy on TV is being dragged out of his house half naked! Probably one of them Doom players. How funny is it, by the way, that the toads who pull the footage for these dimwits still haven't discovered Quake yet? They always show Doom on a really crappy PC. I love it.

Anyway, it's all for ratings, and I don't buy into it very much. Tell me how the economy is doing, the scores, and whether the sun's coming out, and go away. If the people that license video games don't like what's in them, they should let someone else who won't chop them up buy the game. The game in question is rated M anyway, which really makes censoring it a crime. It just really gets under my skin.

Well, rant permeated, have at our latest endeavor. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we did making it.

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Number of times Brady's Dreamcast disappeared to play Soul Calibur: immeasurable. Where's my Dreamcast?

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OCTOBER 1999

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GR

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GR VOL. 2, ISSUE # 5

GAMERS' REPUBLIC

TRANSCONTINENTAL GAMING GUIDE
A MILLENNIUM PROJECT



THOUSAND ARMS .52

There's role playing, and then there's Atlus' Thousand Arms. The first RPG to combine 3D polygonal architecture with full-screen anime dialogue screens and hand-drawn 2D characters, TA comes to us via RED Company, creators of Bonk and the popular Japanese game and anime series, Sakura Wars.



CRASH TEAM RACING .26

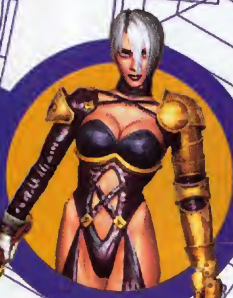
The game that took Brady out of the crunch-time loop, Crash Team Racing will go down as one of, if not the, deepest cart racing games to date. CTR marks Jason Rubin and the team at Naughty Dog's last stint with their familiar orange friend, superstar Crash Bandicoot. (Sniff.)



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JET FORCE GEMINI .18

Anyone with a pulse and a Nintendo 64 will want to read up on this month's cover feature, RARE's Jet Force Gemini. Join Juno, Vela, and their dog Lupus on a sci-fi trek that spans an entire galaxy!



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frontlines

SHENMUE...ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO PRINT!

On August 5, the original release date of Shenmue (since moved back to October 28), Sega released 100,000 "What's Shenmue?" demo discs to retailers across Japan in an attempt to sustain interest in Yu Suzuki's multi-million dollar magnum opus. The GD-ROMs were given away free with the purchase of a new Dreamcast system or game, and needless to say, they were all snapped up in a matter of hours.

HEAD AND SHOULDERS

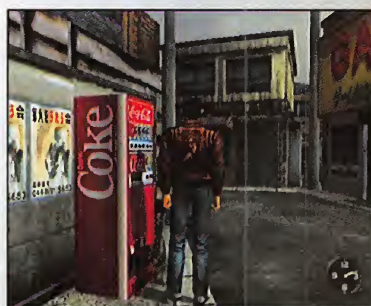
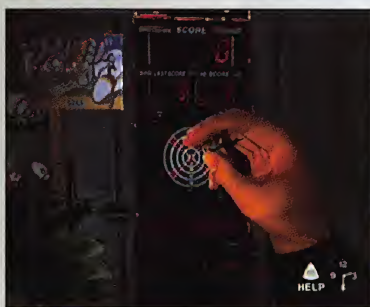
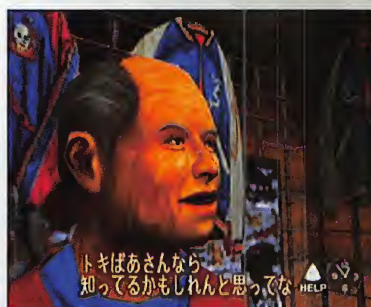
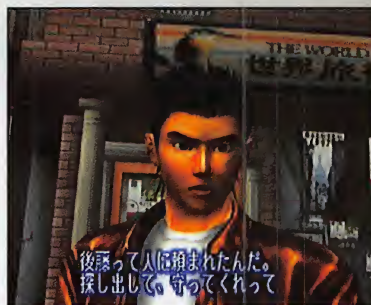
The first part of the demo is a graphical demonstration featuring a closeup (head and shoulders) of four of Shenmue's main characters as they talk to the player about the different systems in the game. You can use the D-Pad to move the camera around the character's head as they talk, zoom in and out with the buttons, and adjust the lighting with the analog cup. The detail is phenomenal, with realistic hair that blows gently in the breeze, lip-synced mouth movements and even an environment reflection in the character's eyes, if you zoom in close enough!

FIND YUKAWA-SAN

The second part of the demo is what we've all been waiting for—a chance to actually *play* Shenmue. The player is informed, through Hatsuki Ryo's notebook, that Yukawa-san (the Sega exec who has featured so prominently in Sega's Japanese advertising campaign) is in possession of a "game disc" that several parties want. Ryo must track down Yukawa before 7:00 p.m. and retrieve the disc. And with that you are turned loose on a limited section of downtown Yokosuka.

In this demo, the player can talk to any one of the dozens and dozens of people walking the city streets (all communication is in real-time voice), enter into certain buildings, play a couple of mini-games in an arcade (darts and slot machines) and engage in two Q.T.E's—a fight scene and a chase scene. You have seven game hours to find Yukawa (90 seconds = one game hour) and the task is relatively straightforward, but really it's just an excuse to give you a taste of the Shenmue experience.

And what an experience. With so little space it is hard for me to convey how astounding this demo really is. Shenmue is quite simply the most beautiful game I have ever witnessed. The individual characters may not look as amazing as the warriors of Soul Calibur, but in terms of breadth and scope, you've never seen *anything* like this. The attention to detail in the environment and the feeling of being immersed in a living, breathing world is unparalleled. City folk go about their daily routines, children play on the sidewalk, bikes and motorcycles pass you by on the street, shop keepers haggle with customers; there's even a stray dog that trots around marking its territory! The demo



Sega's demo CD is more than enough to give gamers a taste of what's still to come, and keep them clamoring for the final disk! But why does Yukawa-san look so concerned? We'd love to be in a room full of Dreamcasts!

features various weather conditions too, ranging from snow to clear blue, and as the sun sets and the moon rises, stars appear in the sky.

What's Shenmue? A project so epic in scope, so ambitious in nature, that it promises to re-define our expectations of video games.

THIS FERRARI DOESN'T HAVE A BACK SEAT EITHER

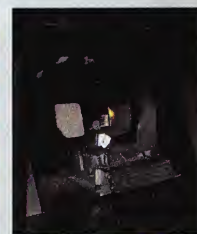
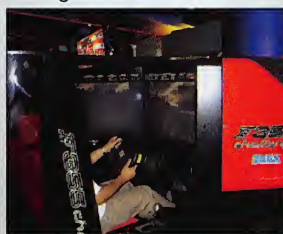
Remember the excitement you had playing Daytona or Scud Race? Well, they pale in comparison with F355 Challenge, Sega's latest arcade racer, which we recently had the chance to experience firsthand. Equipped with four Naomi boards, this machine blows one away with its marvelous physics and incredible graphics.

"This racing simulator is made for serious racers," claims super producer Yu Suzuki. Three 29-inch monitors present a full frontal and side view, giving the game an awesome, panoramic quality. A six-speed gearbox coupled with three pedals (acceleration, brake, and clutch) and speakers in the bucket seat to enhance the roar of the engine are enough to make you feel that you are actually driving an F355. Also, the machine is equipped with a semi-automatic, Formula One-style paddle shifter located right behind the wheel, so those with no experience using a stick can get the same driving pleasure.

What makes F355 Challenge special is that it

does not make it easy for the players when they choose to drive using a stick shift, which disables all auto-guidance functions and challenges you to drive a Ferrari properly and realistically. You have to watch the revs when shifting up and down, and if you make a mistake, you can end up scratching gears or sending the needle beyond the redline. And since the layout of the three pedals is exactly that of the F355, one with experience can engage in heel and toe maneuvers.

Sega has not confirmed if it will bring this expensive game to the U.S. It is certainly unfortunate for American gamers that they may never get to play it. Even in Japan, only selected arcades such as Joypolis have the machine. Let's hope that SOA bring this machine to GameWorks, or at least convert it to Dreamcast.



BYE BYE BERNIE

In a surprising move, Sega of America president Bernie Stolar is no longer part of the company, having been released just a scant month before the domestic launch of the Dreamcast. Sega has been fairly tight-lipped about the reasoning behind his departure, leading to speculation that he may have had a falling out of some sort with the board at Sega of Japan. His replacement is Toshiro Kezuka, former president of Honda France, who entered the Sega fold in 1995 where he most recently served as deputy chairman. Interestingly, Sega Enterprises president Shoichiro Irimajiri was an employee of Honda for nearly thirty years. All is not sour grapes for Stolar however, as he was given a five million dollar severance package—that'll buy a lot of cigars. It was nice working with you, Bernie.



WELCOME TO JOYPOLIS...



When the summer kicks in, Japanese kids get a long vacation (a whole month!), and inevitably seek out places to enjoy their time off. One of the places that kids want to visit is an amusement park. A new Joypolis, one of seven Sega amusement parks located in major cities throughout Japan, opened at Odaiba, Tokyo, and is one of the kid's favorite destinations. TJP is a place packed with state-of-the-art arcades and attractions created by Sega like Aquarena, a new attraction that just opened in June. It's a cyber aquarium where 28 different kinds of detailed marine creatures dwell in a virtual environment, and you are encouraged to tap the "water tank" because all the marine creatures on the screen react to your touches.

"The aquarium was not built to give the same kind of excitement or thrill that is sought after in normal amusement attractions. Instead, we tried to incorporate the technology into the amusement machine. The aquarium was created for edutainment using Sega's state of art technology," according to Sega PR.

This virtual aquarium contains many species, including sperm whales, dolphins, and rare tropical fish called Arowana. When you touch the screen, a wave form is generated and the fish reacts in a different manner depending on where you touch the screen.

Full-sized sperm whales measuring 18 meters and two dolphins react to your touches and do tricks for you on a 6 x 2-meter-wide screen.

PRICE WARS, EPISODE ONE

Always ready for battle, Sony and Nintendo have decided to drop the price of their current consoles to \$99 as the Sega Dreamcast sets to enter the market. Both the PlayStation and N64 will hit the ultimate mass market price for a console, \$99, on Monday, August 23. The N64 offering will feature two controllers; Nintendo also plans to add five new titles to its Players' Choice lineup on the 23 (Zelda, Banjo-Kazooie, 1080, Yoshi's Story, and Rogue Squadron).

"For every avid game player anxiously watching for a new hardware platform, there are five or more discriminating consumers just waiting for the existing library of top games to come within their financial reach," explained Peter Main, Nintendo's executive vice president.

NIGHT, NIGHT, DC

In an issue of Japan's *Official Dreamcast Magazine*, Sonic Team's Yuji Naka confirmed that there is indeed a NIGHTS game in development for Dreamcast! Chances are that he will serve in a supervisory position while he and Sonic Team continue work on their still-secret original project.



GR TAKES THE CHECKERED FLAG

Speedy Tom Stratton schools the competition...

On August 4 and 5, Infogrames invited us to be a part of A Day at the Races, an event that helped drive home the Test Drive franchise it's planning to blanket the market with. Racing fans can anticipate three new titles stemming from the license: TD LeMans, TD Rally and TD Cycles. Each one is looking very promising.

The first day consisted of usual press fare, though there were some uneasy things said about Sega. Most of those representing Infogrames were quite surprised at the pre-sales accom-

plished for the DC. During their talks about product development, the Dreamcast took dead last to efforts Infogrames plans to present. In fact, they seem to be more excited by the PSX2 and the notion of Dolphin coming up soon, giving yearly product projections for every system but the Dreamcast. You can guess what the topic of conversation was after the presentation, sitting outside at the bar.

The next day we went to the legendary Laguna Seca Raceway and Skip Barber Racing School to learn how to handle the track. After being zipped in to a nifty racing suit, we were briefed on how to corner and stop and save a wipeout. The class was to basically tell us not to wreck their pretty cars—something I am proud to say I didn't.

In all actuality, the GR team placed first during the day's driving events. What did we win? Applause, and envy of our peers.



YOU'VE GOT MY AXE!

Konami Japan is currently in the process of suing Namco over what it feels is an infringement on one of its patents. It seems that Namco's Guitar Jam follows a little too closely in the footsteps of Guitar Freaks for Konami's liking, and it's trying to stop the sale and distribution of Jam. In the meantime, a PlayStation version of Konami's Guitar Freaks has just been released along with a goofy guitar controller that is quite the piece of plastic, featuring three fret buttons and a pivoting purple wedge representing the strings. The game itself is like Beatmania, in that you must time the playing of certain notes in sync to the pre-

recorded music and, true to its brethren, just a little bit addictive. Though it would probably do well here, no U.S. release is planned.

Rock out with Konami's new stringless wonder for PS (left). Separated at birth? Konami certainly thinks so (right).



MORE ZELDA!

Nintendo Announces Zelda Gaiden

Information on the sequel to The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, the unanimous choice for best game of 1998, has been released by Nintendo Co., Ltd. The game continues the epic saga of Link and his adventures in Hyrule. From what we understand, in addition to new areas to explore, the game will include new onscreen displays, new weapons, new enemies and the young Link will now be able to ride his horse, Epona, which was not possible in Ocarina of Time. We aren't sure if the time-travel aspect and the ability to play as adult Link is included in the new version. NCL will be showing a version of Zelda Gaiden at the Nintendo Space World Show at the end of August.

HEY, BLOOD...



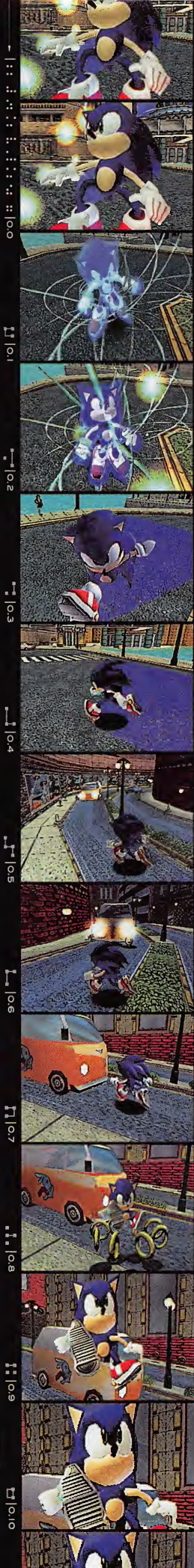
Hey clerk! They move the porn?!

Mr. Clean? The room served as a reminder: read porn, get splattered—a good message for the kids! Oh well. They also over-compensated when they tweaked the camera and (I'm sure accidentally) cut a dramatic scene (the famed oil tank run) that took the developers six months to complete! Now that hurts. It's still a great game though, and Activision has improved it dramatically otherwise.

Climax Graphics' Blue Stinger, coming to you via Activision, will be doing so sans the cool blood bath in the adult film section of the Happy Market. They say "crap" and "sh%*" and "bi*&%" in the MA game, which is loaded with gallons of blood as you grind and perforate the game's enemy mutations, but they had to call in



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TOKYO CHARACTER SHOW '99



as a favorite dating spot among the young, because one can see the entire bay area of Tokyo along with the so-called Rainbow Bridge, which is beautifully and colorfully illuminated at night.



A total of 41,092 people, ranging from their early teens to twenties, gathered at the Tokyo Big Site, an attendance figure up more than 5,000 from the last show. The line was, of course, longer than ever, and as of the opening of the show at 10 a.m., had already become more than a mile long. About 13,000 attendees waited in line on the first day and 11,000 on the second day. Roughly 400 people stayed overnight in the hopes of snatching-up the items that they wanted to get at the show. Now that's determination.

As the number of visitors to the show increased, so did the exhibitors. Fifty-three exhibitors occupied 8,670 square meters of the east hall. Various kinds of character goods were displayed or sold, and there were live talk shows featuring popular voice actors and actresses and an autograph reception area. The latest games, such as Tekken Tag Tournament and over ten Shenmue kiosks, were set up for visitors to check out. But the show is basically for the character-related goods, not for the games, and all the people who visited were there to buy rare items.



Under steamy weather conditions, the second annual Tokyo Character show was held for two days on July 24 and 25 at the Tokyo Big Site, located in a futuristic district called Odaiba, which is built on reclaimed land off the coast of Tokyo. The district is also known



Several high school visitors that I talked to were not from the Tokyo area, and some were from as far away as Nagoya and Osaka, which are some 200 miles from the show. And



attending the event is not cheap. One chap remarked, "I set aside my allowance and did some moonlighting to get to this show and buy stuff."

The main attraction of the show is that you can buy limited edition character goods, and one of the reasons why people stay overnight is that the sales are strictly first come, first serve.



Moving around the show was tedious. As soon as the gate was opened, a flock of people burst into the exhibition area like a tsunami, and I was almost engulfed by them. Lining up at each booth was a difficult task, too. As I finally managed to line up in front of the ESP shop, I witnessed teens pulling out their wallets with large sums of money in a buying frenzy. In contrast, retailers were professional; they swiftly put items into bags and handed them over in exchange for the yen.

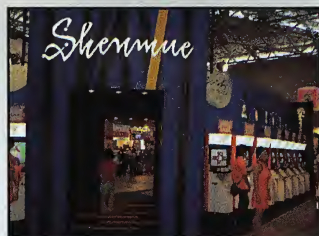
According to Mr. Okano of the event bureau, "The TCS was successful. More than the projected 40,000 people came to the show, which was designed to create new business chances and expand the ever-heated character business market under the currently dire Japanese economic condition."





At the Sega Enterprises booth, Shenmue-related goods were in high demand. Ranging from mouse pads to key holders, numerous items relating to the game were on sale. One of the newest items was a stamp watch, which has a sticky part on

the back of it so it can be placed on almost any surface. Besides Shenmue character resin mock-ups and illustration boards, which could also be seen at Sega's Shenmue event, there were ten playable Shenmue kiosks set up for visitors.



Shown here are mockups for Shenmue resin figures. Looks nice! Sega of Japan has not yet confirmed their release.



Although TCS 1999 is for the sale of character goods, several playable games were exhibited. Those who had already purchased what they wanted and those who missed out took breaks playing games.



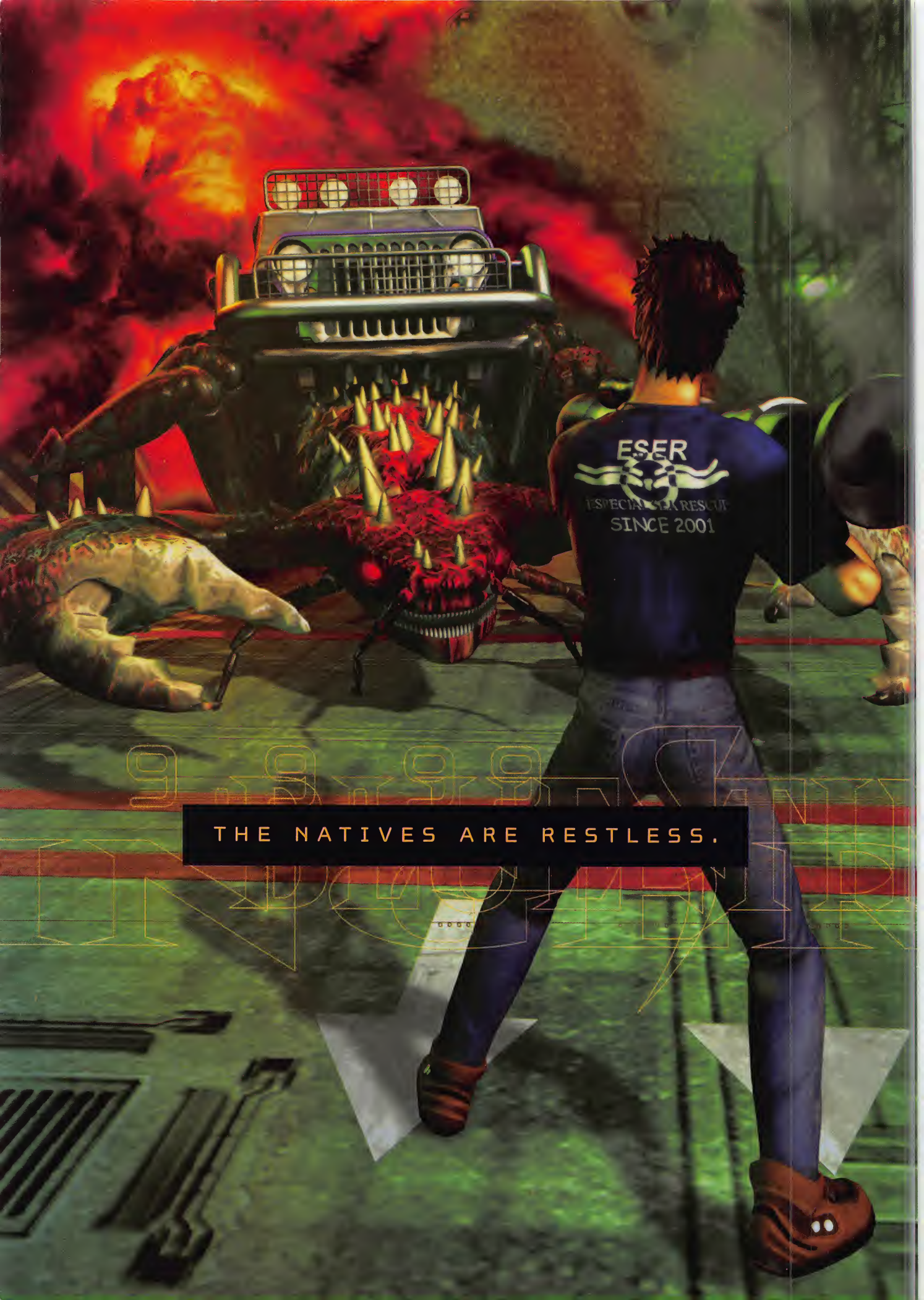
At Namco's booth "fukubukuro," or "lucky baggage," was ready to be sold. The bag is sealed and contains lots of Namco-related character goods, but unless one buys it, one never knows what is inside. Also, Tekken Tag Tournament arcade machines were set up and most of the time the area was surrounded by visitors. Located next to the arcade, Tekken energy drinks were sold to quench the thirst of Tekken players.



The Kadokawa booth was especially crowded due to the Ah Megamisama, which is scheduled to be released as a movie next year. People were anxious to get a special telephone card for Card Captor Sakura, which sold out immediately at the booth.

Entrance restriction to the booth was enforced and only 30 people could enter, in 15-minute intervals. Also, *Slayers*- and *Nadesico*-related goods attracted many buyers, especially because they could get autographs from the designers. This made the area very crowded. —reported by Jun Sakai





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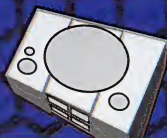
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database

YOUR NUMBER ONE SOURCE FOR TOP SELLING CONSOLE AND COMPUTER GAME STATISTICS



top ten selling playstation titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JULY 1999



1. DRIVER
2. TARZAN
3. FINAL FANTASY VIII
4. TRIPLE PLAY 2000
5. WWF WARZONE

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------------------|------|
| GT INTERACTIVE | 6. NEED FOR SPEED III | EA |
| SONY | 7. SYPHON FILTER | 989 |
| SQUARE | 8. MLB 2000 | 989 |
| EA | 9. STAR OCEAN: 2nd Story | SONY |
| ACCLAIM | 10. NCAA FOOTBALL 2000 | EA |

top ten selling nintendo64 titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JULY 1999

1. POKÉMON SNAP
2. SUPER SMASH BROTHERS
3. SW EPISODE 1: RACER
4. RUGRATS: Scavenger Hunt
5. GOLDENEYE 007

NINTENDO
NINTENDO
LUCASARTS
THQ
NINTENDO

6. MARIO PARTY
7. COMMAND & CONQUER
8. SUPER MARIO 64
9. ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME
10. MARIO KART 64

NINTENDO
NINTENDO
NINTENDO
NINTENDO
NINTENDO



top ten selling saturn titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JULY 1999



1. VIRTUA COP 2
2. SONIC R
3. NHL '97
4. FIGHTING VIPERS
5. NHL ALL-STAR HOCKEY '98

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|-------|
| SEGA | 6. CROC: LEGEND OF GOBBOS | FOX |
| SEGA | 7. NBA LIVE '98 | EA |
| EA | 8. SPACE HULK: Vengeance | EA |
| SEGA | 9. TOMB RAIDER | EIDOS |
| SEGA | 10. MADDEN '97 | EA |

top ten selling pc titles

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JULY 1999

1. ROLLER COASTER TYCOON
2. RAINBOW 6 Gold Pack
3. CABELA'S Big Game Hunter 2
4. LEGO ISLAND
5. NEED FOR SPEED 3

HASBRO INT.
RED STORM
HEADGAMES
MINDSCAPE
EA

6. SIM CITY 3000
7. TOTAL ANNIHILATION: Kingdoms
8. TOMB RAIDER
9. STAR WARS EP. 1 TPM
10. HALF-LIFE

MAXIS
CAVE DOG
EIDOS
LUCASARTS
STERRA



top ten overall console

*RANKED ON UNITS SOLD JULY 1999

1. DRIVER-PS
2. POKÉMON PINBALL-GB
3. POKÉMON BLUE-GB
4. POKÉMON RED-GB
5. POKÉMON SNAP-N64

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|----------|
| GT INTERACTIVE | 6. SUPER MARIO BROS DX-GB | NINTENDO |
| NINTENDO | 7. SUPER SMASH BROS-N64 | NINTENDO |
| NINTENDO | 8. SW EPISODE 1: Racer-N64 | NINTENDO |
| NINTENDO | 9. TARZAN-PS | SONY |
| NINTENDO | 10. RUGRATS: Scavenger Hunt-N64 | THQ |

world republic top ten games

Japan

- | | | | |
|--|----|---|-----|
| 1. JIKKYOU PRO BASEBALL '99: Beginning Version | PS | 6. STAR WARS Ep 1: Racer | N64 |
| 2. YUGIOH II: Dark Duel Stories | GB | 7. MEDALOT 2 (Kabuto ver.) | GB |
| 3. SEIKEN DENSETSU: Legend of Mana | PS | 8. OGRE BATTLE 64: Person of Lordly Calibur | N64 |
| 4. ACCOMPANIMENT ANYWHERE | PS | 9. MEDALOT 2 (Kuwanata ver.) | GB |
| 5. DINO CRISIS | PS | 10. SARUGETCHU (Ape Escape) | PS |

* FROM JULY 19 ~ JULY 25 1999

united kingdom

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|----|----------------------------|--------|
| 1. DRIVER | PS | 6. SW EPISODE 1: Racer | N64/PC |
| 2. SYPHON FILTER | PS | 7. ABE'S EXODUS | PS/PC |
| 3. SILENT HILL | PS | 8. V-RALLY 2 | PS/PC |
| 4. COLIN McRAE RALLY: Platinum | PS | 9. TOMB RAIDER 2: Platinum | PS/PC |
| 5. GRAN TURISMO: Platinum | PS | 10. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE | N64 |

*WEEK OF 8/4/99

gamers' republic top ten games

*BASED ON GAMES PLAYED THROUGH AUGUST 16, 1999



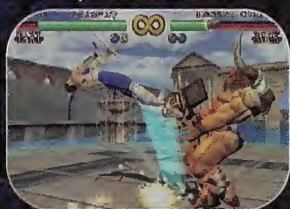
d. halverson



- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1. JET FORCE GEMINI | N64 |
| 2. THOUSAND ARMS | PS |
| 3. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 4. RAYMAN 2 | N64 |
| 5. KAIN 2: Soul Reaver | PS |
| 6. EARTHWORM JIM 3D | N64 |
| 7. BLUE STINGER | DC |
| 8. READY 2 RUMBLE | DC |
| 9. TNN HARDCORE HEAT | DC |
| 10. SLAVE ZERO | DC |



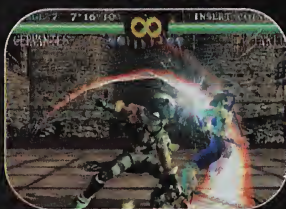
b. siechter



- | | |
|------------------------|-----|
| 1. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 2. SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 3. SUIKODEN 2 | PS |
| 4. CRASH TEAM RACING | PS |
| 5. WIPEOUT 3 | PS |
| 6. TNN HARDCORE HEAT | DC |
| 7. AIR FORCE DELTA | DC |
| 8. PEN PEN | DC |
| 9. RAYMAN 2 | N64 |
| 10. FINAL FANTASY VIII | PS |



m. hobbs



- | | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 2. SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 3. SEAMAN | DC |
| 4. CRASH TEAM RACING | PS |
| 5. OMEGA BOOST | PS |
| 6. TRON NI KOBUN | import |
| 7. AIR FORCE DELTA | PS |
| 8. GUITAR FREAKS | import |
| 9. BUGGY HEAT | DC |
| 10. MGS: VR Missions | PS |



t. stratton



- | | |
|--------------------------|--------|
| 1. INDIANA JONES: ToD | ARCADE |
| 2. LAND STALKER | SG |
| 3. ULTIMATE 8-BALL | PS |
| 4. VIRTUA RACING | SG |
| 5. SEGA RALLY | SS |
| 6. HARD DRIVIN' | ARCADE |
| 7. ACE COMBAT | PS |
| 8. WORLD SERIES BASEBALL | SS |
| 9. NINJA SPIRIT | TG16 |
| 10. ALIEN CRUSH | TG16 |



pooch



- | | |
|------------------------|--------|
| 1. JET FORCE GEMINI | N64 |
| 2. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 3. CRAZY TAXI | ARCADE |
| 4. TEKKEN TAG TOURN. | ARCADE |
| 5. GOLDENEYE 007 | N64 |
| 6. MARIO GOLF | N64 |
| 7. SYPHON FILTER | PS |
| 8. NFL 2000 | DC |
| 9. HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2 | DC |
| 10. SUPER SMASH BROS | N64 |



e. sear



- | | |
|------------------------|------------|
| 1. PAC MAN WORLD | PS |
| 2. POKÉMON PINBALL | GBC |
| 3. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 4. GRAN TURISMO | PS |
| 5. TIME CRISIS | PS |
| 6. SUPER MARIO BROS DX | GBC |
| 7. ANTZ | GBC |
| 8. POTTY QUEST | PALM PILOT |
| 9. CAESAR'S PALACE 2 | GBC |
| 10. SURVIVAL KIDS | GBC |



s. mosquera



- | | |
|---------------------|------|
| 1. NFL 2000 | DC |
| 2. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 3. NEO TURF MASTERS | NGPC |
| 4. DRIVER | PS |
| 5. SONIC ADVENTURE | DC |
| 6. GUARDIAN HEROES | SS |
| 7. THOUSAND ARMS | PS |
| 8. READY 2 RUMBLE | DC |
| 9. GTA 2 | PC |
| 10. NBA SHOWTIME | DC |



d. smith



- | | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| 1. SOUL CALIBUR | DC |
| 2. FINAL FANTASY VIII | PS |
| 3. DANCE DANCE REV. | ARCADE |
| 4. THOUSAND ARMS | PS |
| 5. TOP SKATER | ARCADE |
| 6. GRANDIA | PS |
| 7. OMEGA BOOST | PS |
| 8. TOKIMEKI MEMORIAL | SAT |
| 9. GRAN TURISMO | PS |
| 10. DEAD OR ALIVE | PS |

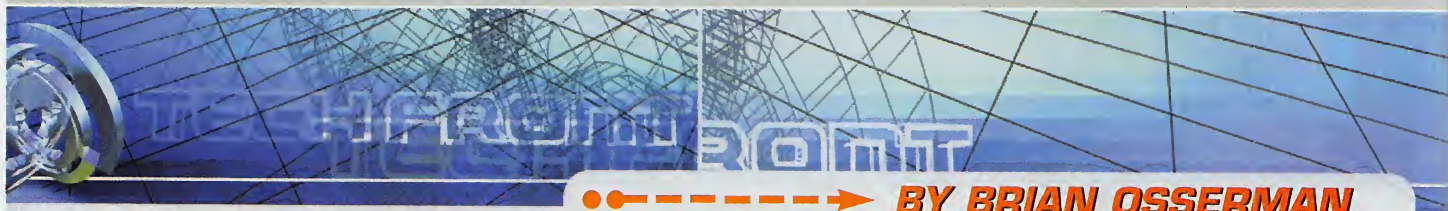
While regular games consoles have marched to a rather relentless rhythm of technological improvement, with no console holding mass-market dominance for more than a few years at a time, the market for portable gaming has been nothing short of bizarre. Despite early competition from hardware that was vastly superior in the form of the Atari Lynx, Sega Game Gear, and Turbo Grafix Express, the modestly designed Nintendo Game Boy achieved a market dominance that makes the PlayStation's success pale by comparison. Of course, the main factors were the games available and Nintendo's marketing power, but Nintendo even managed to convince people that the longer battery life and smaller size outweighed the Lynx's sprite handling and scrolling capabilities and color screen, which could be played at night without separate accessories. When Sega went a step further in 1995 and introduced the Nomad, a portable which was fully compatible with Genesis, Nintendo chose to simply ignore it, and despite the Genesis' considerable market share and large library of games, the Nomad didn't even put a dent in the Game Boy's dominance. In an ironic twist that flies directly in the face of conventional wisdom on competitive market forces, it wasn't until the Game Boy's last competitor was being put on clearance in stores nationwide that Nintendo chose to make its first real technological improvement in the nearly 10 years the Game Boy had been on the market. Newly developed technology allows the Game Boy Color to be the first color portable system that functions without a back light, which puts it in very familiar territory for Game Boy owners: it has a much longer battery life than anything which uses a backlight, but it can't be played without external light of some sort. Now, SNK has taken advantage of the same technology to develop the Neo Geo Pocket Color, and this month we'll compare the two companies' offerings, both to each other and to past products.

What the Game Boy Color and Neo Geo Pocket Color have in common is unparalleled convenience. They both measure in at a diminutive 5" x 3" x 1", with the Game Boy Color making use of the same vertical design as previous Game Boys, and the Neo Geo Pocket Color using a horizontal design instead. Thanks to the new reflective color LCD technology, neither needs to use a backlight, which is a serious source of power consumption. This means that both systems use a pair of AA batteries, and get considerable play time out

myself repeatedly turning them slightly to face me, seeing that they got a lot darker, and having to hurriedly turn them back. It can also be something of a balancing act figuring out what angle will reflect enough light for the game to be easily visible, yet won't reflect a bright light directly, which makes it impossible to see. That complaint aside, having avoided the Game Boy for years because of its screen, I was certainly pleasantly surprised by the quality of the screens on the GBC, as well as the NGPC.

Nintendo clearly feels it is competing mainly against itself, in that if it can get every Game Boy owner to purchase a Game Boy Color, it'll be thrilled (hardly unreasonable, given that Nintendo advertises having sold 26 million Game Boys in the U.S. alone). From this perspective, it makes perfect sense that Nintendo is pushing the new color screen and backwards compatibility most heavily, as they are a great draw for current Game Boy owners. The backwards compatibility is a particularly nice feature; the GBC CPU can run at 1 or 2 MHz (the original ran at 1 MHz), depending on whether it's playing a game for the original GB or one designed for the GBC. Users can choose between several different palettes of up to 10 colors each (you may wonder how it can display 10, if the original Game Boy only showed four shades of gray; this is achieved by the ability to assign different color palettes to backgrounds and sprites). As far as competing against the Neo Geo Pocket Color (or any earlier portables), Nintendo also likes to emphasize that the Game Boy is not at all a stand-alone product. Peripherals like the Game Boy Camera and Printer are well beyond the scope of simple gaming. With the Game Boy Color, Nintendo introduced an IR port, with visions of kids being able to trade Pokemon characters without buying any extra cables. The first products supporting this feature are already out in Japan, and well into development in the U.S.

Interestingly, SNK is emulating this approach to some extent. It has announced that it will be bringing the Dreamcast link cable to the U.S. for the Dreamcast launch, so that players can trade artwork and characters between the Dreamcast and Neo Geo Pocket versions of King of Fighters. However, as far as what SNK actually emphasizes in comparison to the Game Boy Color, the 16-bit processor is certainly at the top. SNK also points out that thanks to the horizontal design, the Neo Geo Pocket is more comfortable for those with larger hands, despite being essentially the same size. Having tried both,

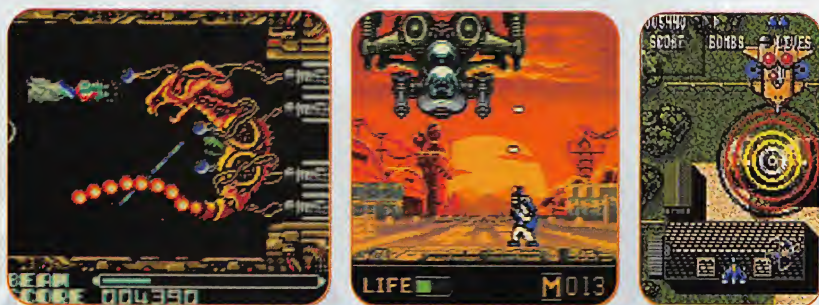


of them: the GBC advertises 20 hours, and the NGPC claims it gets 40 hours out of each pair of batteries. Earlier color portables, which all used backlights, were also a lot more power hungry: the Lynx used six AA batteries that only lasted 4 to 6 hours. When used in a well-lit area, both the GBC and NGPC's screens work quite well, with a crisp display that makes problems like sprites blurring when they moved (easily my biggest complaint with the original Game Boy) entirely a thing of the past. Colors are vivid, the resolution is good (166x144 for the GBC, and 160x152 for the NGPC), and there's no question that the screens make games a lot more user friendly. My one gripe would be that both screens, relying on reflection of outside light, often need to be held at a rather precise angle to get the best picture. I often found

I have to agree that the Neo Geo Pocket Color is indeed more comfortable to use. Although this isn't hardware-related, it's worth mentioning that SNK is going beyond the usual Neo Geo fare with the NGPC software lineup: it just announced that it will be releasing a Sonic the Hedgehog title in December.

Trying to compare the technical specs of portables is a tricky business at best. With 3D consoles it's easy to at least attempt to compare figures like resolution, number of polygons per second, and effects like lighting, transparency, and texture filtering. Theoretically, it is possible to make similar comparisons of 2D hardware, but features aren't nearly as standardized, and published specs tend to be substantially less detailed. To illustrate how complicated the situation can be, the Neo Geo Pocket Color advertises showing

146 colors on the screen at a time, and the Game Boy Color advertises 56. By comparison, the Lynx could only show 16 colors on the screen at a time. So this should mean the NGPC games are more colorful than GBC games, and a lot more colorful than Lynx games, right? Well, not quite. Play a NGPC game, and it's likely that the first thing you'll notice is that while the backgrounds look nice, the characters are all extremely simplistically colored, with three colors each. Take a close look at a GBC game, and you may notice the same thing. It appears that both the GBC and the NGPC have sprite processing hardware that restricts each sprite to four colors, of which one color is transparent. And it's not even so simple as that. The Game Boy Color, for instance, has eight different four-color palettes for sprites, so it's possible to have eight different moving



On the left, *R-Type DX* on Game Boy Color shows off a range of color, but has some problems with flicker and sound drop-outs when the action gets fast and furious. Center, SNK claims a wider color palette, but like the GBC the sprite-style characters still sport only three colors at a time. Thrown in for good measure, *Raiden* on the Atari Lynx, right, competes graphically, but didn't get a broader market.

TECHFRONT

THE CUTTING EDGE
OF 8- AND 16-BIT
TECHNOLOGY:

PORTABLES



objects that are colored differently, but if there are more than eight, some will have to use the same three colors. The take-home lesson of this little example is that you should be suspicious if the number of colors a system can show isn't a power of two (like 16 for the Lynx, 64 for the Genesis, or 256 for the Super Nintendo), as this is a strong indication that the programmer isn't free to use all those colors anywhere on the screen.

In terms of the general specs, though, the Neo Geo Pocket Color would certainly seem to have the upper hand. It has a 16-bit processor rather than an 8-bit processor (and this is one of the few cases where bits do matter: the jump from 8 to 16 almost always produces a substantial improvement), the average cartridge size appears to be two Megabytes instead of one (you've probably seen both advertised as 16 and 8 megabits, but I just can't bring myself to use terminology that started in a marketing department as a way of fooling people), and the sound chip seems more flexible (in R-Type DX on the Game Boy Color, the music cuts out when you fire, while Metal Slug on the Neo Geo Pocket Color doesn't have this problem). But once again, there are a lot of less tangible specs, most notably sprite handling and scrolling capabilities, that can really only be compared by looking at games that take good advantage of them. Unfortunately, both systems are suffering from an

unusually strong first-generation effect, because they are both backwards compatible with older, non-color technology, and nearly all of the current games are being designed with both the newer and older systems in mind. This makes it even trickier to get any sort of reliable comparison, so I'll have to settle for saying that with the current crop of titles, the Neo Geo Pocket Color looks better, but not strikingly better. Disappointingly, there are substantial glitches even in these early titles. R-Type DX on the GBC has some areas where the sprites flicker or turn partly black, and Metal Slug on the NGPC has slowdown in several areas. Neither system looks as nice as the Nomad did; for that matter, it looks like the Lynx had more raw horsepower, with excellent scrolling capabilities, and built-in sprite scaling support. While there is definitely a lot to be said for how small the NGPC and GBC are, and their far superior battery lives, I hope that the next generation of games does a better job of showing off their capabilities, as I can't help but think that today's technology should be capable of more.

If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions for topics you'd like to see covered, please email techfront@gamersrepublic.com.



JET FORCE GEMINI



RARE knows a thing or two about the N64... The JFG models speak for themselves—an exquisite melding of classic sci-fi and anime styles.



JET FORCE GEMINI

BY DAVE HALVERSON



*Jet Force Gemini takes 3D action and shooting to new extremes...
Barricade the bedroom door and have at RARE's latest!*



P

robably the most celebrated developers in the world next to the man himself, Shigeru Miyamoto (and company), RARE crafts masterpieces, sets benchmarks, and makes game systems do things they otherwise cannot on a regular basis. RARE's reign began some time ago when it created *Wizards and Warriors* and later the high-water mark platformer for the 8-bit generation, *Battletoads* for the NES, and continued throughout the SNES' five unforgettable years of 16-bit domination, with games like *Battletoads* in

Battlemaniacs and the *Donkey Kong* series. In its most challenging era so far, having to deal with a cartridge system in a CD world, RARE has somehow managed to repeat this success time and time again. So far in the Nintendo 64's lifespan, RARE's Bond send-up *GoldenEye* has become one of the most successful video games of all time, and its first critter-based 3D action platform game for the 64, *Banjo Kazooie*, is arguably the best in the category.

In the beginning, especially in the case of *Battletoads* (both versions), RARE made *hard* games. Not hard by today's wimpy standards—I mean freaking hard. Pinpoint accuracy along with memorization had to be maintained for long stints to get through individual areas in a single level. And continues were as sparse as a big-screen TV in a trailer park. Since signing on as a Nintendo

brand, RARE has mellowed some, creating user-friendly games in the Nintendo tradition: easy to beat, hard to master. With *Jet Force Gemini*, however, we get a temporary reprieve as this game, while not nearly as hard as RARE's 8- and 16-bit efforts, provides expert gamers with a space opera that they can really sink their teeth into. Hallelujah!

Don't get me wrong—*Jet Force Gemini* isn't overly difficult. More so, it requires equal amounts of shooting prowess, familiarity with the Nintendo 64 pad design, platforming ability, and smarts; in other words, it's friggin' brilliant. The game begins with an impressive intro as Juno, Vela, and Lupus descend a peaceful allied planet occupied by Ewok-like Tribals, and prepare to take matters into their own hands. The evil tyrant Mizar has been kicking tail all over the Galaxy, but now he's messing around in the Gemini's jurisdiction, enslaving their tribal allies. Since the federation won't move in, the team decides to go it alone—and we've got an epic game on our hands.

As the campaign to reach Mizar's HQ starts, you begin the game playing as Juno. If you mastered *Turok*, getting comfy with the control scheme is easy. If not, take your time in *Greenwood Village*. Soon, you should have no problem jockeying between the game's two main control schemes. While running around, platforming, and exploring, the standard-issue 3D platforming controls apply, but once you spot the enemy, *Turok*-like controls take over (I say "like," because they're much better). Your character immediately goes transparent, and the wand is used for targeting, the A and B buttons for toggling weapons, and the directional buttons for



More than mere spontaneous confrontations, each boss is introduced and preceded by real-time cinema. They don't go down easy either. Once you figure out where the weak spots are, you'll need to throw down the dodging skills. There's only a small window of vulnerability so you've got to be quick. When they go down, though...they go down!

movement. Instantly you are transported into a first-person shooting mode that rivals GoldEye. Basically, if you can see it, you can shoot it. Whether it's right in your face or a hundred yards away (those would be game yards), you can shoot enemies with great accuracy, even before you discover the sniper rifle. There is no fog, the textures are gorgeous, single vines reign down from the vegetation above, and you realize, I am about to have a whole lot of fun. Think fast, though, because the enemy AI in JFG is almost so realistic that it's frightening. Close in on an enemy and he'll retreat and take cover; back away and he'll ascend on your position. Snipe him from the left and next he'll go right. Hit him again and he'll fall back completely and tell a friend. I swear, there are times in this game when you'll seriously wonder how these insect hordes can be so smart.

Each of the game's three characters (well, four, if you count Floyd) harnesses distinct

abilities, relative to the game's environments, and each will take a different path to Mizar's palace. The shapely, busty Vela has the ability to swim underwater, Lupus can jump and hover, and Juno can withstand fire. As you traverse each level the first time, you will notice arteries that the other characters will be able to access once you return with them. This creates a monumental replayability factor and prolongs the enjoyment of JFG for untold hours, depending on your skill level. The levels themselves are cavernous, jaw-dropping polygonal wonders that prompt you to stop and take them in for a minute before beginning to unlock the secrets within. From creepy tunnels to vast barren wastelands that rival Hyrule field, they are stunning. To access new areas within each level, a key is usually needed, or you may simply have to clear the area of enemies to



It's easy to forget about the Tribals being held captive, as they're usually hiding out of sight. There's good reason to save them, so keep an eye out.





You'll encounter and converse with an array of wondrous creatures on your way to Mizar's. Heed their words, for they know the way of the Gemini.

JET FORCE GEMINI



proceed. Once you arrive in an area, a red light depicts the open door (where you've been), and green, uncharted territory. This is certainly a welcome feature, as some of the levels are so big and easy to get lost in.

Within the environments the team will need to perform a diversity of tasks. Beyond the platforming, shooting, and exploration needed to complete each, you must also search for captive Tribals, health gems, weapons and weapon energy, and at first, each other. Juno must find Vela, Vela must find Lupus, and then Juno needs to re-assemble Floyd, which is in itself quite the daunting task. Once these objectives are achieved, the three must meet up at the massive, awe-inspiring Mizar palace. Like something out of *Stargate*, you will not believe how big this place is when you get there. Once you do, you'll actually get to fly around as Floyd and eventually, one by one, ascend to...well, you'll see.

You may recall that the characters in JFG were initially somewhat cuter, with a heavy saucer-eyed anime lean. On the advice of E3 attendees and, I suppose, testers at NOA, RARE has re-tooled Juno and Vela with, in my opinion, excellent results. While they still have a slight anime look, it's not so much that the mainstream won't recognize it, and, at the same time, they both look markedly better. Vela espe-





*Jedi... Gemini... see any resemblance?
I'll take these three over Lucas' bunch any day!*



JET
FORCE
GEMINI



Jet Force features an incredible multi-player battle mode that runs surprisingly smooth. This game truly has it all.

cially is a real gem(ini). Ha! Seriously, I could stare at her delicate little side step all day and her shapely little bod is easy on the eyes. Surprisingly, Lupus is really fun to play with as well. Leave him idle and he scratches like a real dog, but double jump and watch the boosters thrust from his paws. That's some dog! Not to take anything away from Juno; after all, he can walk on fire.

Before I run out of real estate, it's also worth mentioning that within JFG there are two types of racing games (!), top down and third person, 20-plus weapons, 16 hidden characters to unlock for multiplayer action, a plethora of astounding effects like reflections, climate changes (including realistic rain and fog) and big, bad (very bad) bosses. Bringing all of this wonder to life are something like two-and-a-half hours of cinema, and one of, if not the, best soundtracks I have ever heard come out of the machine.

After unlocking Vela and Lupus, and bringing Juno through to Mizar's palace, it was time for our Nintendo rep to head back to Seattle, and I bid the game a fond farewell. Since, I've thought of little else than sitting down for a prolonged period of time, solo, and really having at every nook and cranny of the game. So, sitting here with my JFG Jones, trying to recollect the day's events, I'll leave you with the notion that I know everything I've said to this point really doesn't matter all that much. Because, when you see the RARE logo on the box, chances are you're gonna buy JFG regardless. And rightfully so: RARE has never made a bad game. I'd have to say that Jet Force Gemini is worth more than we're going to pay for it. It's absolutely brilliant, and further proves the RARE philosophy of quality over quantity. ⚡



■ GRAPHICS ARE TRULY REMARKABLE
■ THE BIGGEST LEVELS EVER SEEN ON THE 64!

■ UNHEARD OF REPLAYABILITY!
■ AWESOME SOUNDTRACK, ONE OF THE 64'S BEST!

REPUBLIC SAYS...

RARE DELIVERS ANOTHER N64 MASTERPIECE. IF YOU CAN ONLY BUY ONE GAME FOR THE 64 THIS WINTER... FIND MORE MONEY! DK64 AND PERFECT DARK ARE ONLY MONTHS AWAY!

A



Samurai Shodown 2™

NEOGEO POCKET COLOR™

Fatal Fury-First Contact™

Bust A Move Pocket™

Metal Slug-First Mission™

Baseball Stars™

Get Pocket Power!

Portable, handheld, 16 BIT CPU
146 Simultaneous colors
Revolving Joystick
40 Hours of Continuous Play
6 Color Casings



Pac-Man™



SNK®

NEOGEO POCKET™




GET POCKET POWER



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AS WE ENTER THE 21ST CENTURY, THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY IS MORE POPULAR THAN EVER BEFORE. SEGA'S RETURN SEEMS TO BE SOLIDIFIED WITH THE DREAMCAST RECENTLY SETTING A NEW INDUSTRY MARK OF THE HIGHEST PRE-SELL ORDERS EVER (200,000+), AND WITH A NEW SYSTEM ALREADY ON THE WAY, SONY'S PLAYSTATION IS REACHING PHENOMENAL U.S. MARKET DOMINANCE WITH MORE THAN 23 MILLION SYSTEMS IN AMERICAN HOMES. AND THEN THERE'S THE POWERHOUSE NINTENDO — THE COMPANY CREDITED WITH SINGLE-HANDEDLY REVITALIZING THE VIDEO GAME INDUSTRY IN 1985 WITH THE NES. SO EXACTLY WHAT ARE THE PLANS FOR THE "BIG N" IN THE FACE OF A LEGITIMATE, BIG-TIME THREE-COMPANY WAR? IN SEARCH OF THE ANSWERS, GAMERS' REPUBLIC WAS GRANTED AN EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL (BUT NICEST AND PERSONABLE) MARKETERS IN AMERICA — PETER MAIN, NINTENDO OF AMERICA'S EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, SALES AND MARKETING.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: FIRST OF ALL, HOW DO YOU FEEL YOU DID AT E3 THIS YEAR?

Peter Main: We felt very good about our E3 show this year. As you well know, the show is measured on many different levels: the retailer level, the analyst level, the media level, and most importantly, the developer/publisher level. And we came away having scored very highly on all four of those levels. We felt that with our solid product line-up that we had a lot to talk about. We think it's the best second-half 1999 lineup in the indus-

try in terms of breadth, depth and uniqueness. And when you add the overlay of the surprise news of the Dolphin announcement and of the direction we're going in, it all added up to a very good event. I think one of our best in the last several years. It felt good.

GR: WE'D LIKE TO KNOW IF YOU WERE YOU ABLE TO TAKE A LOOK AT SEGA'S BOOTH AT THE SHOW AND COULD TELL US WHAT YOUR IMPRESSIONS WERE OF THE DREAMCAST?

PM: Yeah, I did. I spent a lot of time over there until Bernie Stolar kicked me out [laughing]. He didn't really, Bernie's a great guy. I did spend time there, as did our Treehouse gang and game evaluators and I think that on balance, our opinion is that Sega came out of the show stronger than they went in. There are a lot of question marks about the parent company, the financial stability and is the consumer ready to forgive them. But they showed some nice products there that were real and were happening, and now it's in the hands of the developers to finish it and the marketers to make sure that the world embraces it. I wish them well, but not too well [laughing]. I think that they did a nice job of strengthening the perception of what the product was about to the var-

ious publics. And from a somewhat difficult perspective, and that being of course the experience in Japan and the well-publicized rocking and rolling that's going on over there right now.

GR: WHAT CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR DEAL WITH RETRO STUDIOS? ARE THEY GOING TO BE LIKE ANOTHER RARE?

PM: It's a group in which we do have a direct investment. I'm not prepared to disclose the size of it, but they have got an early start on developing for the next system, and it's analogous to a Rare-type structure, we call it a second-party.

GR: SPEAKING ABOUT THE DOLPHIN, WITH ABOUT TWO YEARS STILL LEFT IN THE NINTENDO 64, DO YOU THINK THAT LAUNCHING THE DOLPHIN AT THE END OF THE YEAR 2000 IS REALISTIC?

PM: I think that there are two questions here: the first is, technically can it be done; the other is, practically, from a marketing standpoint, is it the best option? I think in response to the first question—technically is it possible—we wouldn't have announced that date if we weren't able to support that, yes, it is possible. It will work on the basis of an existing chip that is being modified, an existing foundry to cast it, technology that is well under development both at ArtX and Matsushita — so from that standpoint, everything is entirely feasible. The question of at what stage will the software be in...the people that look at this sort

AN INTERVIEW WITH NINTENDO'S PETER MAIN BY POOCH

I guess the show was full of surprises for everyone. Not only with the Dolphin announcement, but probably the most surprising platform is a 10-year-old technology called Game Boy. People were talking in May about this success and if you look at the actual sales data that came out at the end of May, it says that fifty-five-percent of all the hardware sold in the U.S. in the month of May was Game Boy. On a unit basis that is just staggering. But as you well know, software is the name of the game and it's being driven by Pokémon and the new Game Boy Color deluxe games and it's just on fire. The rate of acceleration is almost scary — we've got a rocket on our hands.

Getting back to the subject of E3, Game Boy was probably the last thing on everyone's mind as they were prepping for areas of interest and where the activity will be at the show. The retailers are now all throwing their hands in the air, saying that this could be the hottest thing this fall and the holiday, Dreamcast or no Dreamcast. They're excited about DK64 and Perfect Dark and Jet Force Gemini, but Game Boy just appears to have struck a number of right chords with the consumer—whether it's the Pokémon line-up or the very broad line-up of all the genres of software. It just made the show a sparkler and added

to the holiday season, but clearly well through next year, regardless of the date of the release of Dolphin.

GR: DO YOU THINK THAT CONSUMERS AND DEVELOPERS WILL BOTH WELCOME A THIRD SYSTEM? DO YOU THINK THAT THE INDUSTRY IS GOING TO BE BIG ENOUGH FOR A THREE SYSTEM RACE?

PM: Well, the cynic would say absolutely not and history says that only two ever survive. I said at E3, both publicly and privately, that I forecasted an outside sale of about 400,000 to 500,000 Dreamcast units between launch and the end of December. And the reason I said that was, looking at what happened with the original Saturn launch and the PlayStation launch—in the same kind of time frame two years ago, both attracted about 500,000 to 600,000 with the early adopters. So I think that that will happen. The bigger question is, beyond an early adopter crowd that might total 1 million, will it have the legs to continue? And I guess the answer to that is really in the Sega camp. Will they have the follow-up product? I noticed that they have a line-up of about 11 titles through December. They are not all triple A titles, but there's some nice product there. Another important question is, having done the launch, will they have the sustaining power and the follow-through power to attract the next round of players? I'm not going to presuppose that they're going broke in four months time, or that the developers are all going to pull the plug and go

of thing say that it's well within the realm of possibility for Dolphin, and the "ifs" and "maybes" are what happen as we get down the road of that development.

But more importantly, the second part of the equation—the practicality—is about where are we at with the N64. I think that you hit it right on the head when you said that we're about a year to a year-and-a-half behind the other guys. I'm not especially enamored with continuing to be the last guy into the marketplace as we were with N64 and with 16-bit and, as a matter of fact, even with the 8-bit NES. But at the same time, for us and for PlayStation, as of the end of June, if you look at the total market, it shows that within the continental U.S., we've sold about 28 million pieces of hardware between the two of us. A lot of analysts who have been slicing and dicing the industry figures over the last two years and looking at duplicate ownership and other factors, are clearly in the belief that there's a potential market of 42 to 45 million hardware units. The worse thing that we or Sony or anyone else could do, in the interest of, at minimum, a smooth transition of the next platform, would be to ignore that remaining potential and replicate what happened in 1994-95 [Sega's early abandonment of the 16-bit market]. So I assure you that we're very committed to keeping all guns firing on N64 — not only through this holiday season, but clearly well through next year, regardless of the date of the release of Dolphin.

We're going to be looking at improved price



points [as we go to press, the N64 has just dropped to \$99], but more importantly for us, we'll be looking at another round of development on the software front. We've been talking to Rare about the breakthroughs that they feel they've accomplished with Jet Force Gemini, Donkey Kong 64 and Perfect Dark, because there've been great enhancements in a variety of programming techniques that they've used there. Joel Hochberg [president, Rare U.S.A.] was here yesterday and he said, "Peter, when we show you the line-up that we're working on for next year, you're going to faint." And I know about the titles, but am not prepared to discuss them. So we'd be silly to walk away from that kind of continuing opportunity – that being both the payoff for the consumer who's invested in our system, and certainly for us as a corporation, realizing the return on our overall investment in this platform by insuring maximum software in the tail end of the product life-cycle.

GR: SO DO YOU THINK THAT FIVE-YEAR PRODUCT LIFE-CYCLES ARE STILL FEASIBLE?

PM: I think it is doable. In 1999, eight years after the launch of the Super NES, we're still headed to 700,000 to 800,000 pieces of hardware this year, and close to five million pieces of software. That system should be dead and buried and gone away, but there's some really great titles there and it's still a terrific entry point for the parent that's looking for a cost-effective first-time system for their youngster. N64 certainly has

NES against Sega Genesis. We then come back in the second half when the demographic changes – it's more parental involved and a slightly younger demographic. But we also pick up the older group as we finally get the sports guys on and a little bit more into the role-playing – not pure RPG, but certainly as the Zeldas and hybrid products of that kind come along. So, sort of the given is, you play the cards you're dealt and the cards we were dealt were those kind of games and it predetermines the sort of demographic you are going to have in the first few years.

Having looked at that, and having understood that history does repeat itself and what that translates to in terms of market share, I think that you can see us coming to market with Dolphin right out of the starting gates with a broader array in terms of genres represented. And that will come from partnerships early-on in the program that go beyond our conventional high-reliance essentially on EAD in Japan and Rare in England for their exquisite work, albeit in the genres I just talked about.

GR: WITH THE DOLPHIN SOFTWARE BEING DVD, DO YOU THINK THAT SQUARE WILL RETURN TO DEVELOPING FOR NINTENDO?

PM: I guess about the Square issue, I never say never about anything. This industry, like the PC

the hardware engineers in conceptualizing the kinds of platforms that are necessary to bring those wild dreams of his to life. That's a different set of talents than the talents of shareholders and all of the stuff that goes with running a global operation. I wouldn't say he'll never take over, but I sure hope that whatever he continues to do, which I know will be with Nintendo, allows him to maximize his creative output.

On the subject of Mr. Yamauchi, recently Mr. Arakawa and Howard Lincoln were over in Japan for the annual meeting and said that Mr. Y has never been more vigorous and healthy and full of life. So your guess is as good as mine or anybody else's as to when he'll be departing.

GR: ON A SIMILAR NOTE, HOWARD LINCOLN HAS ANNOUNCED HIS RETIREMENT AT THE BEGINNING OF NEXT YEAR. WILL THIS EXPAND YOUR ROLE AT NINTENDO?

PM: What was announced was that the role of Chairman is not going to be replaced. There is going to be a reassignment of a variety of activities, and there is going to be a number of changes made here over the next six to nine months. You'll just have to stay tuned.

GR: WE KNOW YOU RECENTLY CREATED THE IN-HOUSE SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT GROUP CALLED THE NINTENDO SOFTWARE TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT. DO YOU THINK THIS WAS LONG OVERDUE? WHAT IS THEIR ROLE?

PM: I don't know if it's long overdue or not, but



got a huge year this year, whereas I think that PlayStation set out this year to say they thought they could in fact exceed their record nine million units of last year. I think in February Kaz [Hirai, SCEA's president and chief operating officer] suggested those targets at Toy Fair. They've since amended that to seven million. So they're starting down the back side of the curve. We sold about 4.5 million units last year and I think we can do about 5 to 5.5 million units this year, and then next year will be our biggest software year. We're going to have a bigger software year this year than last year, at about 35 to 38 million units, but I think next year will be even bigger than that.

GR: HOW MUCH DO YOU THINK ITS AFFECTED THE N64 BY NOT HAVING A FINAL FANTASY OR A DRAGON QUEST RELEASED FOR THE SYSTEM?

PM: There's no question that coming to market a year later than the others, and coming to market predominantly dependent on first- and second-party sources for software, put us in a box of appealing initially to a younger demographic because of our historic emphasis on character-based gaming. We didn't have sports or some of the kinds of RPG games that Square and the others are creating, so during the first half of the cycle, I think it does put you at a disadvantage. But history again repeats itself. The 60/40 market share we looked at during the first 24 to 36 months of the N64 life-cycle is not unlike the shares that we looked at the first half with Super

industry, is more fluid than anything in the history of the business annals. I think you're dealing with a fast-changing world that's still being managed by pragmatic businessmen, and if Square sees that this platform offers an opportunity for them to make a fair return on their shareholder's investment, they're going to be there up-front. Do we know that Square has some special talents? You bet we do. So it says the makings of some things are possible, as are the other long simmering differences of opinions with Namco and the companies of that kind. I believe that every year is a brand new ballgame. Certainly as we address the new platform and the inherent advantages of the DVD medium with inventory questions and cost of goods and that sort of thing, you're going to have all kinds of bright people that understand that business is about making money.

GR: WE KNOW THAT MR. YAMAUCHI IS PLANNING ON RETIRING. IS MR. MIYAMOTO BEING CONSIDERED FOR HIS POSITION?

PM: I truly have to congratulate you on being the first person that I know who's asked that question. I can neither answer yes or no to that question. Mr. Miyamoto's passion is in creating ever-more-compelling software and participating with

what we clearly are focusing on in a variety of ways is augmenting the availability of proven creative talent. Talent that both brings new ideas to the program, and that we can interface with and share the tremendous warehouse of knowledge that Nintendo of Japan and Rare have and to really grow our own. We know the trials and tribulations of doing this purely through acquisition, and sometimes the team clicks and sometimes they don't. So overall, we're trying to grow our own group. We're investing heavily in Rare and Left Field and Retro Studios, and in an embryonic way by supporting the DigiPen Institute, which I believe is doubling its enrollment this fall. While we have a development group in Japan [EAD], it seemed obvious to have one here in North America to take advantage of some of those graduates from DigiPen. There's a lot of exciting things going on over there.

GR: YEAH, LIKE THE RIDGE RACER 64 GAME (SMILING)?

PM: I can't tell you what they're working on.

GR: PETER, MY LAST QUESTION IS PROBABLY THE MOST CHALLENGING AND INQUISITIVE, BUT WE REALLY WANT TO KNOW: WHAT'S YOUR FAVORITE POKÉMON?

PM: Pikachu, of course.

GR: PETER, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO SPEAK WITH US.

PM: Pooch, it was my pleasure.

CRASH TEAM RACING

BY BRADY FIECHTER



Instead of pressing its luck with a fourth installment of the Crash series, Naughty Dog tries its hand at the racing genre. Of course, the game rocks

How is Crash Team Racing different from Mario Kart or Diddy Kong Racing? It's the compulsory question that Naughty Dog must be tired of answering. So I'll give my own answer: devilish weapons, a brilliant powersliding turbo system, deft and intelligent opponents, a fresh and involving Adventure mode, and the light-hearted spirit of the endearing Crash Bandicoot universe. If that's not enough contrast from Nintendo's stable of kart racing games, the only other thing I can say in Crash Team Racing's favor is that, even in unfinished form, it's given me the most fun I've had with a racing game since Mario Kart 64.

No, Crash Team Racing is not finished, and I've only begun to find the many treasures that seem to be buried below the game's luminous surface, so I'll bypass presumptions to delineate the more immutable details.

Details like how the game boasts one of the slickest engines on the PlayStation. Naughty Dog has shown with its Crash Bandicoot platforming series that it knows how to make a game a visual marvel, and Crash

Team Racing funnels all the beauty and

detail of the Crash universe into the mold of a fully 3D racing game. In the distance, nothing pops. Everything is painted in rich, vibrant colors, and the settings through which you race maintain the same cheerful, infectious tone of Crash Bandicoot.

I love the Crash character and the many creations that populate his world, so this automatically qualifies the game's 15 racers as immensely appealing. When the game begins, there are initially eight characters to choose from, who fall into four separate classes: lightweight, balanced, sprint, and heavyweight. Every racer has access to the same power-ups, which are acquired on the track in crates. Like everything else in the game, these items come from the Crash world, and they range from tracking missiles, bowling bombs and poison beakers to turbo boosts, invincibility and warp orbs. With a collection of ten Wumpa Fruit, the power-ups are augmented with added intensity.

To truly appreciate the Crash Team Racing experience, you have to have complete command over the clever turbo and powersliding system. Jumping at the apex of a ramp will grant you a boost of speed on the landing, which can be linked into series of bursts if you're skilled enough to get into the right rhythm. By hopping into a corner, the powerslide is initiated, and the engines begin to redline. When the turbo meter peaks and the exhaust on the karts turns black, a burst of speed is reached that unleashes the tension on the engines, starting the process all over again. After the third redline, the kart explodes into a wheelie-popping stretch of sustained top speeds. To master this technique is to fully enjoy Crash Team Racing. It's inclusion in the game may be the one factor that not only dispels empty comparisons to Mario Kart 64, but places it in a class a step ahead. ✱





CRASH'S LAST STAND

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH NAUGHTY DOG'S JASON RUBIN

GR: CRASH IS YOUR BABY. IS IT TOUGH LEAVING HIM BEHIND AFTER THIS GAME, OR ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH HIS SUCCESS, AND MORE ANXIOUS TO TAKE YOUR CREATIVITY INTO NEW TERRITORY?

Rubin: Naughty Dog has been awed by the success of the Crash Franchise. As we speak, the first three titles have sold somewhere in the order of 16 million copies worldwide. And we would not have been able to do as many titles with the character if it weren't for our love of Crash and the world he lives in. I believe that were the PlayStation an eternal system, then Naughty Dog would never leave the Crash franchise.

But the future holds exciting new hardware to be worked on. Just as we designed Crash for the PlayStation, we would like to design a new character for the PlayStation2. Crash's head size, color, shape, facial layout, spiked hair (or lack of free flowing hair) were not random design decisions, they were system-based decisions. The PlayStation2 gives us such amazing possibilities, bringing Crash along would only tie our hands.

We are totally satisfied with the run of Crash games that we have made and are still making on the PlayStation. I truly feel that Crash Team Racing is Naughty Dog's best game yet, Crash's best game yet, and probably the best engine on the PlayStation to date.

GR: CRASH RACING OBVIOUSLY OWES A LOT TO MARIO KART.

Rubin: Yes, but not only the obvious. Mario Kart (mainly the 16 bit one) inspired us to make a kart racing game, but watching gamers play Mario Kart also taught us places that the genre could be improved.

For example, when we pulled in a dozen kids to play Mario Kart, we noticed that the standard play method is to get a "deathlock" on the gas and then steer... maybe fire a power-up here and there... but not much more. We felt that we could improve on this and give the player more to do with his/her hands during the race. In CTR we give the player constant ways to speed themselves up if they are willing to do more than just hold the gas and steer. There are power slides, power-slide turbos, hand time turbos, brake turns, and more. And the tracks are far more bumpy and twisty than Mario Kart's tracks, so CTR's karts have more capabilities on they ride on more interesting tracks. Since we at Naughty Dog come from a platform gaming background, we wanted to add more vertical gameplay to our racing. That goal translated into wild, aggressively designed tracks, and the fun "big air" jumping mechanics.

Additionally, there are all of the varied play modes, like Adventure, Time Trial, Relic Races, Battle Mode, Bonus Crystal Collection tracks, Boss Tracks, etc. Overall, CTR is a much more comprehensive game than Mario Kart. Working through Adventure mode to get 100 percent the player might find more similarities to a Crash Game than Mario Kart.

GR: DO YOU WANT GAMERS TO LOOK AT CRASH RACING AS A MULTIPLAYER GAME MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE? THE AMBITIOUS ADVENTURE MODE SEEMS LIKE IT WILL LEND A LOT TO A SINGLE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE.

Rubin: We look at CTR as two games. A party game, and a private game... neither one more important than the other. When we were designing the engine of the game, we strove to make the best single player engine on the PlayStation, but then make that engine excel with four player as well. Neither task was considered less important than the other... and neither task was easy!

Likewise, when we were designing the games play modes, we strove to make the game as good as it could be both as a one player game and as a multiplayer game. The truth of the matter is that everyone can play a game one player, but playing multi-player requires more work. You need to schedule with friends, you need controllers, you need a multitap if you have three or four players. You need a stocked fridge. We hope our game will inspire players to get those elements together, and we spent a lot of time creating rewards for taking the time. But ultimately, we want a CTR owner to be able to have just as much fun on those days when his/her friends can't come over.

Adventure mode should satisfy the single players, and the many multi-player modes, including the fully customizable Battle mode, should satisfy even the most demanding multi-player fanatics...and maybe even create some new ones!

GR: THIS GAME IS REALLY TRUE TO THE CRASH UNIVERSE, ISN'T IT?

Rubin: Absolutely. Every level, except the last, was inspired from a previous Crash game. As are the power-ups, like the TNT and NITRO boxes, N. Gin's missiles, the bombs from the Jet Ski levels in Crash 3, N.Tropy's time warp balls, N.Brio's vials from the first game and more.

There is only one new character in the game. The 15 raceable characters are all from the past three games. Do you remember Papu Papu and PinStripe from the first game? You will!

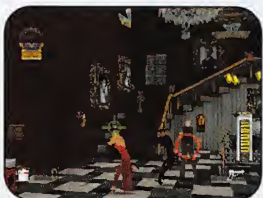
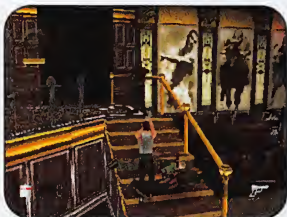
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DIE HARD TRILOGY 2

BY BRADY FIECHTER

You've seen the movies and know the drill: kill a load of terrorists, save a ton of lives, wreak exceptional havoc



Few games can match the breadth of gameplay found in *Die Hard* Trilogy, the explosive action title that gave us three excellent, entirely unique games in one collection: a first-person gun battle through an airport; a driving game through the streets of New York; and, the best of the bunch, a third-person action extravaganza that pit McClane in the Nakatomi Plaza. All these scenarios were based on the *Die Hard* movies, which lent the game an energy that puts it on my list of favorites for the PlayStation.

With a formidable 1.5 million-plus copies sold, it would be irresponsible of

Fox not to tool a sequel, so, without surprise, here comes *Die Hard* Trilogy 2. Like the first game, this promising sequel employs three separate engines, only this time they are dispersed throughout a movie mode that weaves them into one continuous story.

Set in Las Vegas and the Nevada desert, *Die Hard* Trilogy 2 presents an original story that follows the misfortunes of John McClane as he attempts to thwart a terrorist cell. The heart of the original game is left intact, with heavy action as the focus, but a few puzzle elements and a bit more exploration are being placed in the

game for added variety. In the third-person action levels, instead of waltzing into a room with guns ablaze, you'll now have the option of bypassing enemies, carefully drawing on stealth technique if the situation calls for it: sneak up behind a guard and pistol whip him, but make too much noise, and you'll alert nearby enemies.

From the body-charring intensity of the flame thrower to the blood-splattering force of a jack-hammer shotgun, the weapons destruction and violence factor is set on extreme, leaving chunks of the interactive environments in ruin—grenade blasts singe walls, mines leave blood trails, windows shatter, tables and vending machines explode. Both the first-person gun game and third-person action missions include more intelligent, resourceful enemies who exhibit five separate hit zones and less predictability, so expect an even greater, more involved challenge in *Die Hard* Trilogy 2 than in the original. Now, as for a better game overall... ✱





THIS IS THE HEART.



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FIGHTING FORCE 2

BY TOM STRATTON

*Looks like Hawk developed brains to go with his brawn.
Now if he can only get some cool sunglasses.*



What we have here is an attempt to keep a franchise alive. And what better way for Eidos to achieve that than to go with a formula that has proven successful with another title of theirs. Instead of leading the player through a sequence of adjoining rooms or areas like the first game, *Fighting Force 2* involves a lot more strategy and exploration.

Fitted with a new 3D engine, the camera now follows the player around large environments instead of looking in at one perspective. The geometry is suitable and does the job of setting particular moods, but what you see on the PlayStation is going to be basically identical to the Dreamcast. While nothing extra is being done to improve the existing surroundings, the Dreamcast will supply the crispy hi-res visuals and spice levels up with extra effects.

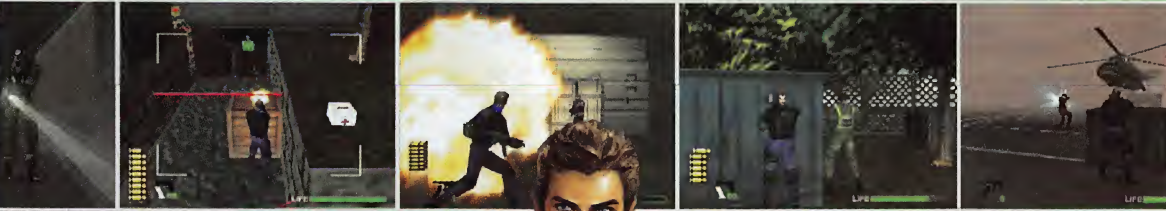
The action has lightened up on hand-to-hand in exchange for a collection of slick and useful guns. Utilizing the cold metal will clear house and make progression easier, but it isn't always the best offense. Spending lead on unarmed henchmen, though fun yet cynical, is a waste and could call unwanted attention to your presence.

Now tailored for a single user, the character you control, Hawk, will have specific objectives during each level, and has all-manner of techniques to help you lead him through the game. The ability to pick up objects is still present, and now he can climb, hoist and has a hankering for computers. 🦅



fiahtinaforce

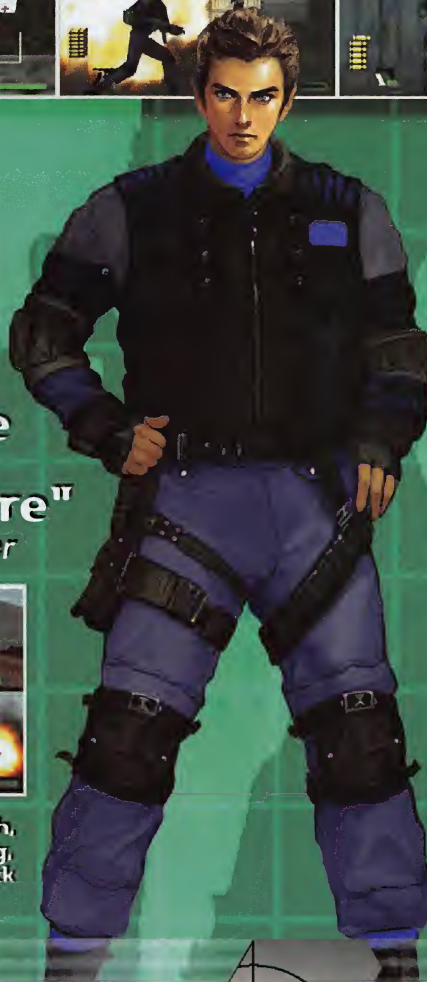
The first blast wiped out your Space Center.
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satellite will strike again...It's your job to
make sure that it doesn't.



"Explosive
N64
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NINTENDO 64



Only For

GTA 2

BY FERNANDO MOSQUERA

One of the most controversial games of last year is back once again. That's right, better hide your local senator and impressionable children, because Grand Theft Auto 2 is on its way to PC and PS.

The sequel to the first-ever car-jacking simulation features the expected graphical improvements and added game features while maintaining the original game's basic feel. Nothing wrong with sticking to tried-and-true sequel methodology, especially when the basic concept of driving around a virtual city causing mayhem on wheels is so pure and exciting.

New gameplay elements serve to expand the game's playability and ensure that one doesn't go on a madness-without-method rampage (not that there's anything too wrong with that). A gang system consisting of various ethnic groups allows you to receive support and missions from gangs you're in favor with. You get in with gangs' respective good sides by causing trouble for their rivals. Once word spreads that you have been going out of your way to mess with a gang's rival, the gang that favors you will offer you jobs with bigger pay than if you go at it alone.

The fun in gaining money is not only the respect that cash brings, but the physical things it can buy. Tools of the trade that can be purchased include gun mountings for your automobile, paint jobs for stolen cars, and various other treats.

The new GTA 2 graphics engine adds a stronger element of 3D than the original employed, while at the same time sticking with the under-used overhead perspective. The end result is intensely easy to use controls played in a graphically appealing game environment. The addition of more and more RAM into high-end videocards has allowed the team at DMA Design to implement a full-blown, distinct city into GTA 2. No

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THE RECENT JAPANESE RELEASE OF *LEGEND OF MANA* INCLUDED A SQUARE PREVIEW DISC CONTAINING DEMOS OF FOUR UPCOMING GAMES: *VAGRANT STORY*, *CHRONO CROSS*, *DEWPRISM*, AND *FRONT MISSION 3*. ALL BUT ONE OF THESE TITLES (*FRONT MISSION 3*) ARE SLATED FOR A DOMESTIC RELEASE IN 2000. AS SUCH, WE THOUGHT WE'D BRING YOU A SNEAK PEEK AT SQUARE'S LATEST, AND FROM THE LOOK OF THINGS, THEY'VE BEEN VERY BUSY OF LATE.

SQUARESOFT

2000 PREVIEW

BY MIKE HOBBS

VAGRANT STORY

Square's new adventure game comes on like a medieval MGS. Incredible real-time action elevates this potential gem

The makers of *Final Fantasy Tactics* are out to prove that they can do more than make strategy games. From character designer Akihiko Yoshida and producer Yasumi Matsuno, *Vagrant Story* is an adven-

ture game featuring the most stunning real-time polygonal direction since *Metal Gear Solid*. The excruciatingly gorgeous demo we grabbed these screens from had no playable elements, but there was enough shown to make the wait for this game almost unbearable. Unfortunately, little is currently known about the gameplay, other than the fact that battles are handled in a Parasite Eve-like real-time system and you can pillage fallen enemies for weapons.



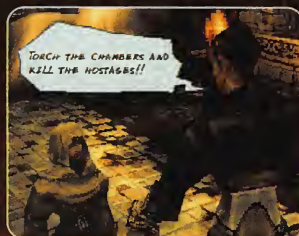
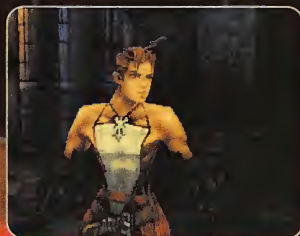
SQUARE

SQUARE

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■ SQUARESOFT PRODUCT INFORMATION

SQUARE



The makers of *Vagrant Story* are fans of American comics, and that influence can clearly be seen in the use of dramatic speech bubbles.





LEGEND OF MANA

This hugely anticipated sequel to the SNES's Secret of Mana is hands-down the most lusciously hand-drawn game the PlayStation has ever seen, featuring screen after screen of artistry uncompromised by technology. The backgrounds here are as marvelous and impressive as the best real-time has to

offer. Beyond the visual spectacle, however, there's some interesting gameplay to be found in this action RPG with two-player support, custom world creation, and even a pet-growing feature. Currently out in Japan, Legend of Mana should find its way here sometime in 2000.



DEWPRISM

Dewprism is the latest from the talented Xenogears team, and after the heavy theme and epic quest of that game, they must've felt the urge to do something a little lighter. The end result is more akin to Brave Fencer than Xenogears, and innovation abounds here. Dewprism features two highly differentiated yet intertwined game scenarios depending on which character you choose at the start of the

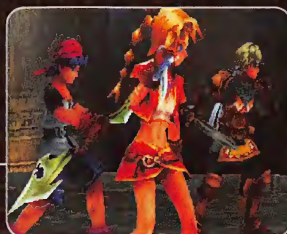
adventure. But beyond enjoying different storylines, the characters play quite differently as well. You'll have the ability to assume the identities of creatures you've vanquished as Rue, the male character, and can cast magic and perform long-range attacks as the female, Mint. Most impressive about Dewprism thus far, however, is the integrity and vibrancy of its real-time engine, showcasing its very appealing character design.



CHRONO CROSS

The other sequel in the mix here is Chrono Cross, the follow-up to the SNES's well-liked Chrono Trigger. The most conventional game here by current Square standards (prerendered backgrounds, real-time characters and battles), Chrono Cross nonetheless inhabits a unique visual world and plays host to number of unique features. One of these is a combat system incorporating a flexible, free attack sys-

tem. And with the exception of the class of the field, Final Fantasy VIII, Chrono Cross features the best-looking background images the PS has yet seen. Curiously, this game is also host to some of Square's weaker character designs. No matter; a masterful quest surely awaits.

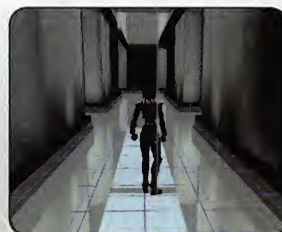


Bungie, the creators of Marathon and Myth, sets out to re-define yet another genre. With looks that kill and unprecedented AI, ONI time will tell...



Riding high on the success of *Myth* and *Myth II*, Bungie could easily continue down that road, developing incarnation after incarnation of its highly regarded, award-winning real-time strategy wonder. It already owns the recipe, why not milk it for all it's worth? Then again, it could have done the same thing with *Marathon*. But traditionally Bungie, like only a handful of other developers, is not content to ride a revenue stream, and instead push on (much to the chagrin of its PR/Marketing departments, I'm sure) to constantly raise the bar. Its latest endeavor (finally) falls under a genre to my liking: third person action/adventure. Taking it a step further, *ONI* has a distinct anime look about it as well, and as a result, has become one of the very few

PC games I really care about. Of course, the best-case scenario would be the announcement of a Dreamcast version of *ONI*, and if the launch buzz continues through to next year, I'm sure that's more than likely to transpire. What Bungie is intent on delivering is indeed a notch above the vanilla state of its competition. The gameplay, which features equal amounts of shooting and hand-to-hand combat, allows Konoko, the game's beautiful lead female, to find and use a realistic amount of guns and ammo, but not unrealistically haul around hundreds of rounds at a time. Thusly, cutting through the game by mowing down foes is negated, and instead, complex fighting and stealth techniques come into play to a previously unseen extent. For instance,



BY DAVE HALVERSON

ONI 鬼





you can kick the gun out of an opponent's hand and use it against a room full of bad guys, or kill the lights, ignite a concussion bomb and dive out a plate glass window while they fry like taters.

Bungie's taken it up a notch in terms of the cast as well. The opponents and non-player characters alike are not all of the same variety as are, say, the Pigs in Duke Nukem (no offense, Duke). Rather, they vary in appearance, movement, fighting style, mood, and even motivation. During the game characters will betray Konoko, while others will change in various ways as the game unfurls. Sound groundbreaking? Well, it is. This is where games need to go after 32- and 64-bit runs its course.

ONI will truly be a cinematic experience. This game could easily set the benchmark for a whole new genre of action and adventure. The technology Bungie is putting into play to make this all look as good as it sounds is as impressive; interpolation, radiosity lighting, and high polygon models drive the visuals to new heights. Interpolation allows for extremely life-like character animation, and when it's applied to a 1200-polygon model like Konoko the results are breathtaking. We'll delve further into the depths of ONI in the months to come. ⚡



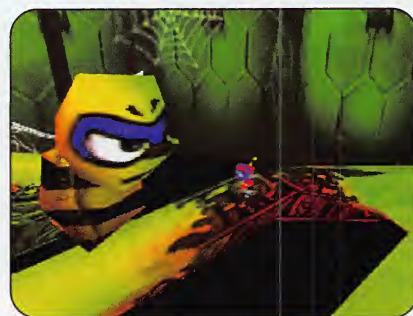


One of the most innovative new characters in years is rollin' onto the N64... Two eyes, one tractor beam, and one wheel... Where's the sprocket?

Sucker Punch has finally found a home for its genre-defining N64 game with one of the world's biggest and best publishers, Ubisoft. A fitting marriage if there ever was one, Sprocket fits right in with Ubi's other crazy characters, Ed and Rayman.

So what's the big deal about a funky little robot/unicycle hybrid that looks like Marvin the Martian with a stick in his butt? Well, quite a bit. Aside from the obvious superlative graphic nature of the game, the gameplay itself is the freshest I've seen in years. That's saying a lot, I know, but in the first area of the game alone, you can build and then ride a roller coaster of your own design! I'm not talking some lame camera-controlled scenario either. The ride is as close to the real thing as you can imagine: sights, sounds, the whole enchilada. Once you've mastered the complex yet simple construction of the coaster, the goal is to build one that will successfully and in succession pass five checkpoints scattered high and low amidst the area. This element alone can keep you entertained for hours and it's

merely one trivial element. Sprocket's method of attack is just as revolutionary. Pressing B activates Sprocket's tractor beam, which can grab anything in the environment. Some items are to be thrown and some, by pressing Z obliterated. Pressing Z while holding B gives Sprocket a long-range beam that reaches for and enthralls whatever is within its reach. Applying this mechanic to the game's realistic physics provides a gameplay experience without compare. The beam is used for other purposes as well, like tethering and swinging. Of course, play mechanics alone do not make a great game. They need to be applied to interesting worlds, clever level design and objectives worth carrying out. Judging by what is in place so far, these elements, too, seem to be moving in the right direction, although much of the game is still in need of tweaking at this juncture. The developer's prowess, however, is obvious, and so the logical conclusion is that Sprocket will be one of the N64's most shining games. We'll be keeping a close eye on Sucker Punch and Sprocket. ⚡



SPROCKET

BY DAVE HALVERSON

BEGIN TRANSMISSION:
SPROCKET v1.03b





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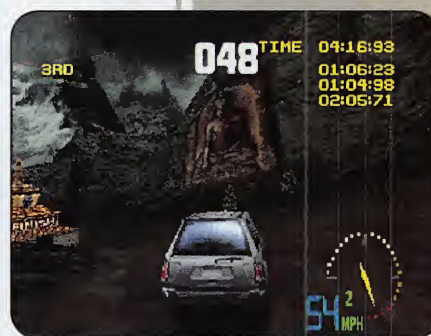


www.gamestop.com

After an abysmal beginning, Infogrames is looking to set things right. Bigger tracks and 30 licensed vehicles elevate this latest Test Drive

TEST DRIVE OFF ROAD 3

BY MIKE HOBBS



testdriveoffroad.

Let's face it: the first Test Drive Off Road was bad. Shoddy graphics and sloppy gameplay made it something of a joke, to be brutally honest. Thankfully, Infogrames took the criticism to heart. The second Off Road was miles better, and they're looking to absolve themselves completely with Test Drive Off Road 3, a predictably bigger and better-looking game than either of its predecessors.

A personal beef with the series has always been the rather bland selection of vehicles. Racing low-tech pick-ups straight off the set of Hometown was not my idea of driving excitement, and Off Road 3 is now a virtual smorgasbord of licensed vehicles. Subaru Outbacks, Land Rover Defenders, and Nissan Xterra join the ranks of the Hummer and Jeep Grand Cherokee.

Track design, the other essential racing game element, has received a similar upgrade, and the courses are now far more varied and interesting. A great example of this is the New York winter location where you bound along cars covered in snow and take a trek through Central

Park. Thanks to the returning streaming engine, this is a long and involved track that takes more than a little skill to find your way through. In fact, this may prove to be a problem for some gamers, as there are moments in this and other tracks where it is a little too easy to lose your way. More defined visual cues may help in the final version.

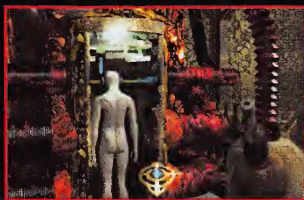
In the video-game world, sequels are often better than the original, and Test Drive Off Road 3 should further this idea. Things can only improve from where this series started out. »





Juggernaut

Get ready for a roller coaster ride through Hell. **Juggernaut** will take you on a journey through time and space that could prove to be the most frightening and puzzling experience ever on a video game. Demonic possession, murder, and ghostly vendettas are some of the terrors that you will be forced to confront as you make your way through this 3 disc epic of horror. If your nerves and your intellect are good enough, **Juggernaut** will amply reward those who accept the challenge of this trip through dementia.



www.jaleco.com

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SLAVE ZERO

• developer/publisher: **accolade** • available: **fall**



A mech action/adventure game without a Bandai logo or a Gundam affiliation is indeed a welcome prospect. Not that I don't like the Gundam series. On the contrary, I do very much. However, variety in this category is sparse at best, and so *Slave Zero* is a welcome sight indeed. The fact that up to 12 people can play simultaneously online doesn't hurt either. Playing this mammoth scale game, you instantly get the feeling of being gigantic as your huge, fluidly animated mech wreaks havoc, weaving his way through the neon-lit streets of the game's futuristic cityscapes. Cars honk and crash and tiny people run for their lives.

The goal is to eventually steal the largest, most sophisticated biomechanical attack weapon ever designed, while the main theme seems to be basically annihilation, targeting and shooting the enemy, and collecting weapon upgrades and power-ups for the inevitable boss encounter—fine with me. With an interesting control mechanism at your disposal, the gameplay seems awkward for a moment, but quickly becomes both second nature and quite fulfilling. The button cluster is used for movement, the analog stick for looking around, and the D-Pad for jumping. Graphically, *Slave Zero* boasts impressive textures, gorgeous lighting and unprecedented animation for this type of game. Though only one level was available for play on our demo, it certainly sparked my interest. What I'm hoping to see, as *Slave Zero* draws closer to completion, are longer, more diverse stages with some measure of tasks involved and more of the beautiful-looking cinematics they've touched on briefly here. We'll of course have more on *Slave Zero* very soon. ⚡



TOY COMMANDER

• developer/publisher: **no cliché** • available: **winter**



Toy Commander, French developer No Cliché's contribution to the European Dreamcast lineup, allows you to go to war on your own living-room floor. You'll command an army of toys, flying and earthbound, military and civilian, in mission-based, third-person 3D action with just a dash of strategy. The hook is the game's setting: a suburban house, made up of eight sprawling areas. No Cliché has managed to make a seemingly ordinary place into a colorful new world; perhaps that's the way we saw things when we played with toys as children. The graphics create an absorbing world, done up in bright colors and filled with odds and ends. *Toy Commander*'s environments are not spare by any stretch of the imagination. They're filled with furniture, fixtures, and clutter, just like a real house, and many interactive bits as well, like switches, movable platforms and, of course, stuff to blow up. The Dreamcast's special-effects capabilities will be put to good use: expect contrails, smoke, realistic water, explosions, and real-time lighting. *Toy Commander* may be the best multiplayer experience to date on the Dreamcast, using all four controller ports for split-screen gameplay. Altogether, it should provide an excellent, offbeat action experience when it debuts in Europe on September 23, with a U.S. release not long after. 🎮



TOY STORY 2

• developer: traveller's tales • publisher: activation • available: fall



Those who owned (or do own) a 16-bit system will without a doubt remember the game Toy Story. From the casual gamer to the hardcore addict, the no-nonsense objectives balanced with steep difficulty and incredible use of CG made the game compelling. This new version won't give you a Woody like the original, but it definitely delivers a Buzz.

The objectives have become more or less mini-games scattered throughout huge free-roaming environments and the difficulty is tuned in at a state of felicity. The visual integrity is top shelf and lots of play mechanics keep the action fresh. When the movie hits theaters, many will go straight to the store to pick this one up.



COOL BOARDERS 4

• developer/publisher: 989 studios • available: winter



Cool Boarders 4 will be backed by all the big-name licensing a giant like Sony can muster: real pro boarders, name-brand boards and clothes, the works. The gameplay will be updated with more new tricks and some interesting action-oriented levels. There will be a bushwhacking mode, where you can head off the runs in search of fresh powder while dodging the ski patrol, and a twist on the classic race in which you'll outrun an avalanche. The Road Rash-esque fisticuffs from Cool Boarders 3 will also be included, with a few tweaks to turn up the action. The Dreamcast is making the boarding genre very interesting this fall, though. CB4 will have to offer some pretty smooth gameplay to stand up to graphical beasts like TrickStyle and Cool Boarders Burrrn.



DEMOLITION RACER

• developer: pitbull syndicate • publisher: infogrames • available: winter



For those gamers who like to turn into oncoming traffic in "normal" driving games, Infogrames would like to present for your consideration Demolition Racer. Developed by Pitbull Syndicate (which just happens to feature some members from the Reflections Team responsible for Destruction Derby 1 and 2), this latest crash-fest features a re-worked Test Drive 5 engine, 16 onscreen competitors, a unique point-tallying system and a soundtrack including music by Fear Factory. Look for Demolition Racer later this year.



EARTHWORM JIM 3D

• developer viz • publisher: rockstar • available: september



Since we last examined EWJ 3D, Viz' stellar-looking 3D game o' Jim, the wormy one himself has undergone a bit of an alteration. While RARE stretched out its Jet Force Geminis, making them taller, the folks at Rockstar and Viz did a little squish job on Jim, making him a tad shorter and thicker, with excellent results. The game, which we'll review next month, is really coming together by the way, so stay tuned. I firmly believe that EWJ 3D is going to surprise a lot of people.



TWISTED METAL 4

• developer: 989 studios • publisher: sony • available: winter



989's Twisted Metal III didn't do too well critically against stiff car-combat opposition like SingleTrac's Rogue Trip and Activision's Vigilante 8. Sony will be trotting out Sweet Tooth and the rest of the franchise one more time, though, promising improved physics (less flipping, hopefully), a constant 30 FPS, bigger levels, and better multiplayer, including multitaap support and deathmatch-only levels. The graphics look better than before, and some of the cars (like that NSX) are certainly tempting.



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RAYMAN 2

• developer/publisher: ubisoft • available: winter



We're reviewing the Nintendo 64 version of Rayman 2 currently, and the game is blowing us all away. One can only imagine a 3D adventure of this magnitude with eye popping hi-res graphics. That dream will be a reality soon enough as Ubi is preparing Rayman 2 for its PC and Dreamcast debut, scheduled for this winter. We'll have more developments for you in the months to come. ⚡



RED DOG

• developer/publisher: argonaut • available: fall

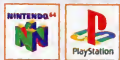


These brand new shots of Argonauts Red Dog, the coolest looking vehicular racer brawler we've seen in a long while, arrived just in time to wedge in. Check out the visibility and resolution in the four player battle mode! Argonaut are on a role of late so we're expecting big doings from their first Dreamcast title. Looks like we won't be disappointed. I need to play this game. ⚡



WCW MAYHEM

• developer/publisher: thq • available: fall



WCW may be getting whupped in the ratings war, but they seem to have the hotter video game license; THQ will be snagging the WWF name this fall, and losing WCW to monster Electronic Arts. EA is looking to make their first WCW game a memorable debut. WCW Mayhem will feature plenty of action inside the ring, plus a faithful representation of the theatrics and backstage jockeying outside it. The game is said to be fast, quicker and easier to control than Acclaim's WWF Warzone, and the career mode will be great for allowing you to send guys who deserve it all the way to the top. Hulk Hogan will lie down for Kaz Hayashi, if this armchair booker has anything to say about it. With the create-a-wrestler mode, you can design favorites from other federations, or even send yourself into the ring. ⚡



TOMORROW NEVER DIES

• developer: black ops • publisher: mgm interactive • available: winter



The game based on the most recent Bond movie has been talked about for some time. It should beat the next flick to market, though, with a release this fall. After the intense development schedule, it'll hopefully be something special. Expect plenty of guns, gadgets, 3D action gameplay with well-tweaked cameras and collision, and nifty vehicles and other conveyances. The skiing stage looks especially intriguing. >X=



TIME LOOP

• developer: mitchell systems • publisher: infogrames • available: fall



Bust a Move with a twist—by far the most accurate and efficient way to describe this puzzle game from Mitchell Corporation of Japan. Placed at the center of a Dreamcast-like swirl, you shoot colored balls outward into a string of rotating beads that are slowly making their way to the center. By combining three or more of the same colored balls, they disappear, and if you've done your job, a combo will ensue as the broken chain reconstitutes itself. With two-player modes and plenty of simple, derivative, and addictive puzzle action, Time Loop fulfills its promise well. >X=



SPEED DEVILS

• developer/publisher: ubisoft • available: october



This wild racing game from Ubisoft is currently undergoing a transplant from PC to DC and the prognosis is good. Speed Devils (formerly Speed Busters) is an amusement park of a racer, with its exaggerated hot rods and courses rife with all manner of unexpected environmental hazards. Everything from a giant T-Rex and Dino de Laurentis-style full-size ape to falling rocks and even a swirling tornado litter the game's numerous and well-conceived tracks, each with a number of alternate routes and shortcuts. Currently 85 percent complete, Speed Devils is on track for an October release. Expect tons of fun from this one. >X=



The Wild West Was Never this Wild!

Do you have what it takes shoot and slice your way through 10 action-packed levels and become the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero"? Rising Zan: The Samurai Gunman takes you back to the wild west of 1800's where, armed with only a gun, Katana sword, and some ultra sexy moves, you'll face a town full of the meanest, ugliest and weirdest hombres you've ever seen.

As you fight your way through this "sushi western" you'll solve puzzles, play mini-games, deal with bizarre and deadly bosses, and earn those ever important "sexy points" you'll need to become the "Super Ultra Sexy Hero"!

- Lots of 3rd person cut'em up and shoot'em up ultra super sexy action
- Use your six gun, Katana sword, or sexy combos to wipe out the bad guys
- Outrageous mini-games to play and puzzles to solve
- Hidden levels and characters
- Weird and bizarre enemies around every corner

"Quirky, offbeat, unusual, bizarre, odd, strange, peculiar..."
-PSExtreme



"...quirky like no other game we've ever come across"

- Next Generation

"...the sort of over-the-top anime slash-'em up the action genre has needed..."

-Official PlayStation Magazine

"This game seems to have it all...."

-PSM



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TEST DRIVE 6

• developer/publisher: accolade • available: fall



The early screen-shots from the Dreamcast version of Accolade's franchise racer leave a little to be desired, but once the game receives some tuning, it should hearken back to the great Test Drives of yore. Dodging the cops will be much more interesting in this installment. They'll track you with multiple cruisers, plus spotting helicopters. ☹



CROC 2

• developer: argonaut • publisher: fox • available: tba



Argonaut's somewhat underrated Croc 2 will soon venture over to the Sega camp looking for some respect on a platform that's not overflowing with action platformers. The game certainly didn't hit any snags in terms of gameplay when it debuted recently, but with its kiddie themes, the game probably paid a price for having too much. Reviewing the PS game, I found it to be a thoroughly impressive and challenging game, but I can definitely see where the extra horsepower will pay off in the visuals. C2 with no clipping? Great! Now toughen up those Gobbos! ⚡



PLANET OF THE APES

• developer/publisher: fox • available: winter



Planet of the Apes is coming back! Fox Interactive sounds very excited about the cinematic qualities of this 3D action-adventure: dynamic camera, over 2000 lines of dialog, and state-of-the-art motion-capture. ☹

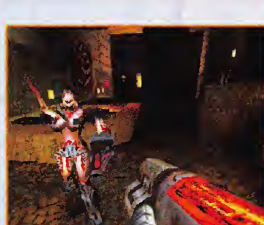


QUAKE 2

• developer/publisher: activation • available: fall



Prepare for slaughter in sepia shades as the PC hit finally comes to the PlayStation courtesy of Hammerhead. Twenty levels, all the weapons, reworked console control, analog support, a reported 30 FPS and best of all, four-player deathmatch, should make this the shooter of choice for PlayStation gamers. A spoiled few are already stuck on Quake III, but II on the PS should provide all the action at a fraction of the cost. ☹



FORMULA ONE '99

• developer: studio 33 • publisher: psygnosis • available: october



After last year's disappointing F1 effort, Psygnosis are set to redeem themselves with Formula One '99. Developed by Studio 33 and sporting an all-new, far more robust engine, this officially licensed F1 game is on track to be the strongest entry since Bizarre Creation's original. The all-new Malaysian circuit will be in, as well as current '99 regulations and team line-ups. Go, Go, Go! ⚡

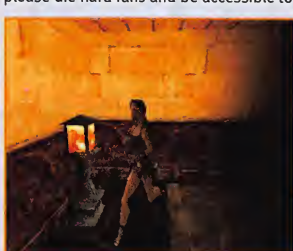


TOMB RAIDER 4

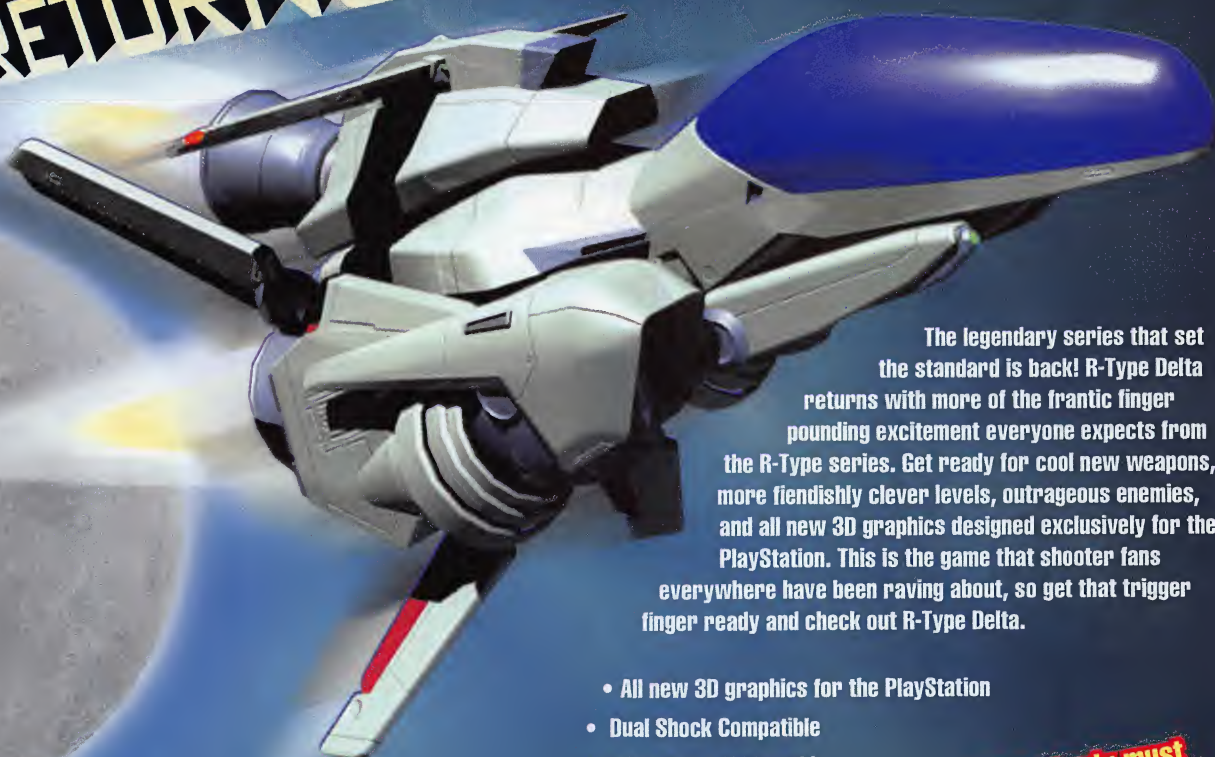
• developer: core • publisher: eidos • available: winter



Where does a developer go in the fourth game of a series? In the case of Tomb Raider 4, they go back. After fielded criticism over TR3's sometimes confusing non-linear nature, Core has taken the latest installment closer in tone and concept to the first game, with its actual "tomb raiding" and a greater emphasis on exploration. To keep things fresh, Lara is now a fully enveloped character and you'll even be able to control her as an adolescent in the training mode. Will TR4 be able to please die hard fans and be accessible to first time users? ⚡



THE LEGEND RETURNS IN 3D!

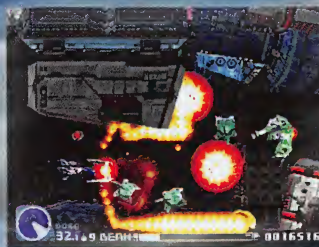


The legendary series that set the standard is back! R-Type Delta returns with more of the frantic finger pounding excitement everyone expects from the R-Type series. Get ready for cool new weapons, more fiendishly clever levels, outrageous enemies, and all new 3D graphics designed exclusively for the PlayStation. This is the game that shooter fans everywhere have been raving about, so get that trigger finger ready and check out R-Type Delta.

- All new 3D graphics for the PlayStation
- Dual Shock Compatible
- 4 ships plus a hidden ship
- 7 levels of frantic trigger finger frenzy
- Top scorers can post and compare scores on the Agatec R-Type Delta Web site

"You simply must buy this game"
-Electronic Gaming Monthly

"...possibly the best R-Type yet"
-PSM



"Awesome original level design, enemies and bosses"

-Official PlayStation Magazine



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GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEWS



GAMES REVIEWED THIS ISSUE

DOMESTIC REVIEWS

AERO DANCING	C+	C	B-
AIR FORCE DELTA	B	B-	B-
BLITZ 2000	B-	B-	C+
CHAMPIONSHIP MOTOCROSS	C+	C+	C+
FINAL FANTASY VIII	A		
GAUNTLET LEGENDS	B+	B	B
JET MOTO 3	D	D-	D
LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER	A		
METAL GEAR SOLID: VR MISSIONS	B-	C+	B-
MUSASHI GUNN PRINCE	B	B	B+
MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS	C	C+	C
OMEGA BOOST	B+		
PAC MAN WORLD	B-	C+	C+
PEN PEN TRICELON	B-	C+	B
READY 2 RUMBLE	C+	B	C
SONIC ADVENTURE	A	A	A-
SOUL CALIBUR	A+	A	A+
SUMMER 2	B+		
THOUSAND ARMS	A-		
TWIN HARBOR HEAT	B+	B	B

IMPORT REVIEWS

FRAME GRIDE	C+
GRAND BATTLE	B+
POP'N TANKS	B
ROBOT DANNY	B+
SEAMAN	Q
STREET SCOOTERS	C
TECH	B+

SPORTS REVIEWS

IN-FISHERMAN BASS HUNTER	B
MADDEN NFL 2000	C+
NFL 2000	A-
NFL GAME DAY 2000	C+

GAME BOY COLOR REVIEWS

CAESAR'S PALACE 2	C
LUCKY LUKE	B

GAMERS' REPUBLIC REVIEW SYSTEM

- [A+ to A]** Games in this bracket are the best of the best. They feature the highest quality visual presentation, and are excellent in both initial and long term playability. The very best video game of its type, worthy of every gamer's undivided attention. *Example: Soul Calibur*
- [A- to B]** Excellent, solid, and highly playable pieces of software, although they lack minor polish to become truly outstanding. Slight frame rate problems, a marginally disappointing ending or any number of small quirks may take an otherwise exalted release down a notch. *Example: Sonic Adventure*
- [B- to C]** Games in this bracket are generally very good, but may have one or more flaws. A game receiving a B- may be a great game that's just too short or has irritating music, while a C may have these same problems plus a couple more. Very good to average entertainment. *Example: Ready 2 Rumble*
- [C- to D]** Games in this bracket require serious help in two or more areas. Perhaps the control responds horribly and the characters animate poorly. Although a game of this caliber may have had a great initial concept, it was never fully realized in the final stages of design. *Example: Madden NFL 2000*
- [D- to F]** Very rarely will you come across a game of this lack of quality. A complete dearth of vision, a determination to remove any semblance of gameplay or fun, and particular attention made to use none of the most rudimentary of the system's proprietary tools. *Example: Jet Moto 3*

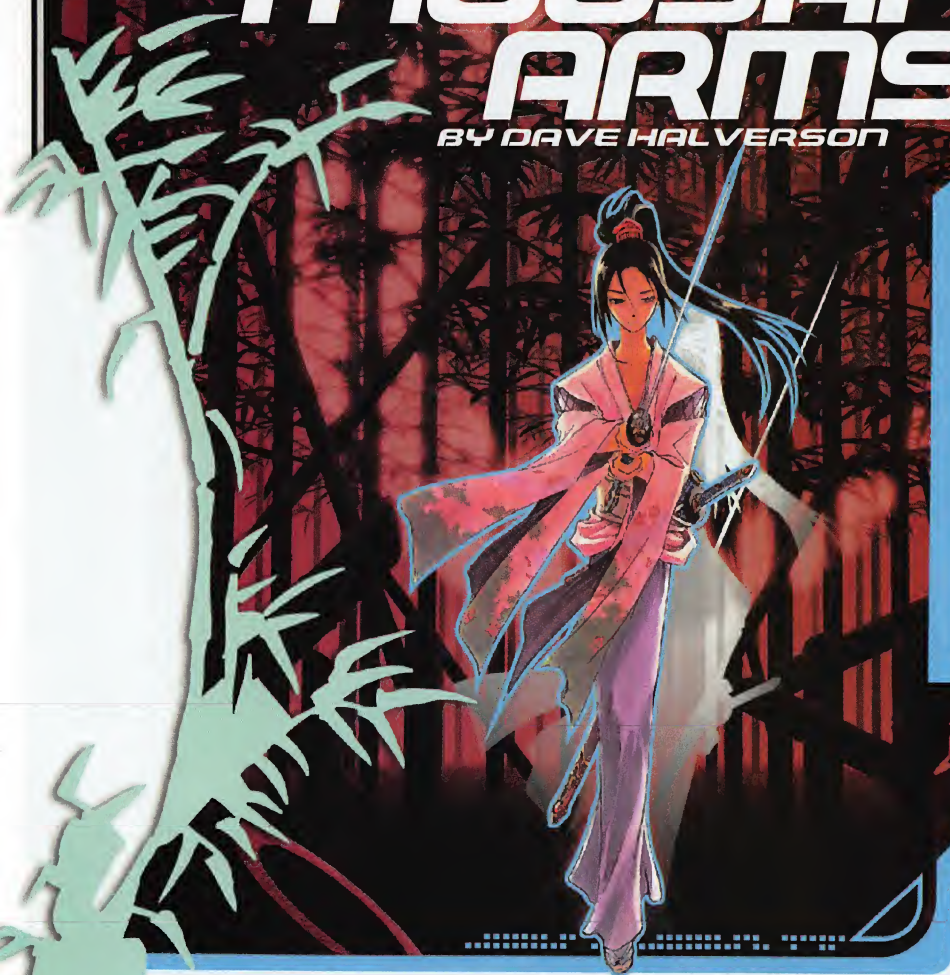
1. Games marked in **RED** are highly recommended for your gaming collection.
2. Games marked in **YELLOW** should be avoided completely.

[Subject to the reviewer's personal preferences, it can be generally accepted that any game scoring a B or higher is a great way to spend your day. Games scoring a low D or F should be microwaved for three seconds and returned.]

Traverse the vast fields and oceans of Tradguld...
Find the sacred altars and discover the power of the Holy Flames

THOUSAND ARMS

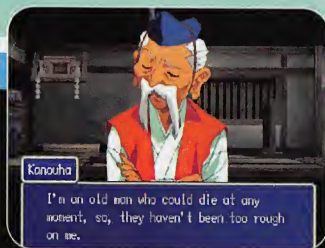
BY DAVE HALVERSON



Anyone who's been following our coverage of Atlus/Red's Thousand Arms already knows that it melds unparalleled polygonal environments with three types of hand-drawn characters; has over 12 hours of professionally voice-acted dialogue; features a mold-breaking interactive story and a dating engine; and is basically two discs worth of unique and inspired role playing from the company that brought us Bonk and Sakura Wars, Red Company. For those of you who haven't been following our coverage, well, now you know. Thousand Arms is the other must-own RPG of the '99 holiday season.

It all begins in the tranquil Land of Tradguld, in a small town named Kant, ruled by Meis Triumph's father, Master Cliff, a not-so-noble Spirit Blacksmith with an inkling for the ladies. When the Dianovan Empire's reign of terror draws near Kent, in their campaign to control the world,

Master Cliff and his people flee, rather than stand and fight. And so, suddenly, the castle Casanova, son of a king Meis Triumph, finds himself alone, hungry, and thirsty, wandering aimlessly on the brink of collapse. Rescued from his own feeble attempt to help a damsel in distress, arriving in the town of Boyzby, Meis is taken under the wing of a truly noble Spirit Blacksmith (unlike his philanderer father) Jaybil and his beautiful sister Sodina. There, in Boyzby, Meis begins to learn about the true nature of his gift, and eventually becomes one of Jaybil's apprentices. The tone of the game is set when Jaybil's other apprentice, Schmidt, is turned to the dark side by the Dianovan emperor, and while Meis and Sodina are away attempting to pull him back, Jaybil is killed by Shaft.





Red sets new standards in real-time polygonal design and texture mapping... Beyond these elements however, lies so much more

In a touching scene, as Jaybil fades away he bestows upon Meis his sacred hammer and talks of the sacred altars and the holy flames they conceal: "Forge a sword with your faith, the spirit will answer your desire." With this, Jaybil perishes and Sodina and Meis set out to put an end to the Dianova reign of terror and oppression and avenge Jaybil. Along the way they will encounter a cross section of characters you won't soon forget, and form bonds with unforgettable allies like Muza, Wyna, Soushi, and Kyleen.

Thousand Arms is structurally assembled in a traditional manner, with towns and cities populated with shops and Inns, with vast fields and oceans in between, and turn-based fighting. It is done so, however, in such a unique way that it really belongs in a class all its own. Inside and out, the towns, villages, cities, and massive conveyances in TA are designed, detailed and constructed to a degree I have never seen in a real-time polygonal game. The architecture is not only diverse, but there is such an abundance of different styles that it conveys a true sense of vastness. The fields themselves are also quite impressive with destina-

tions visible from long distances, scrolling skies, floating mist, and a wealth of diverse terrain, all freely rotational via the shoulder buttons.

Graphically, TA, in my estimation, sets a new standard in real-time polygonal structure and texture mapping. Beyond these elements, though, which certainly make the game a joy to look at, there lies so much more. The battles, for instance, are endlessly engaging—which is good, because there are a lot of them. In a dungeon environment you will be confronted with battles every 20 seconds or so, with each lasting (including loading in the fight itself, and the information screen afterwards) about a minute to a minute and a half. Of course, this is par for the course in any RPG, but often becomes laborious. More often than not, this isn't the case with TA. There are still those times when you're lost, desperately searching for the place where the next event will transpire, when you'll wish Meis could run around unobstructed for a while, but that is to be expected. Besides, the payoff (more gold and higher skill levels as your characters gain experience) is usually worth the trip.

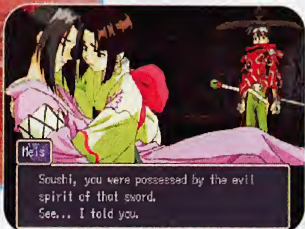


Meet interesting people, go on dates... and save the land! *Forge powerful weapons with the strength of the elemental spirit!*

The combat is carried out in pseudo 2D (3D elements abound) with highly animated hand-drawn sprite-based characters amidst polygonal back-grounds. In a fairly conventional manner in terms of execution, you're allowed three members to partake in your battle party: One in front, who will do all of the hand-to-hand combat, and two to back him or her up with healing spells, item usage, etc. Should your lead character meet an untimely demise (or if he's getting his butt kicked and you just want to pull him out), the next will jump in, and so it isn't until all three are extinguished that a battle is truly over. Brutally strong and wickedly shy, Muza will get you through most of the game with a minimum of healing: with his big blade and brute force he mows down most opponents with ease. But when major confrontations arise, Meis' summon spells are sorely needed. As you progress in the game the Holy Flames imbue Meis with these spells, each conjuring up huge beasts and other mystical deities in spectacular displays of pyrotechnic fury. Also, as you forge stronger weapons—by dating girls no less—all of the characters' spells become increasingly spectacular to look at; there's something about the melding of polygonal effects and hand-drawn characters that really awakens a game's visuals.

So how does going on dates help forge better weapons? It's called the Master System. As a Spirit Blacksmith, whenever Meis comes across a Smithy, he can strengthen existing weapons and add new features to them like spells and special attacks. The ingredients needed to forge these elements are Master Points, which are acquired in battle, and a girl's elemental spirit. Female accompaniment is essential for making weapons stronger: The higher the girl's Intimacy level, the higher her elemental spirit, and...well, you get the picture. So you've got to make these young ladies fall for Meis, which isn't all that easy, as he can be a tacky little fellow just like his father, but only if you let him. Answer carefully, and always bring a gift! Don't be cheap and just buy the lipstick either.





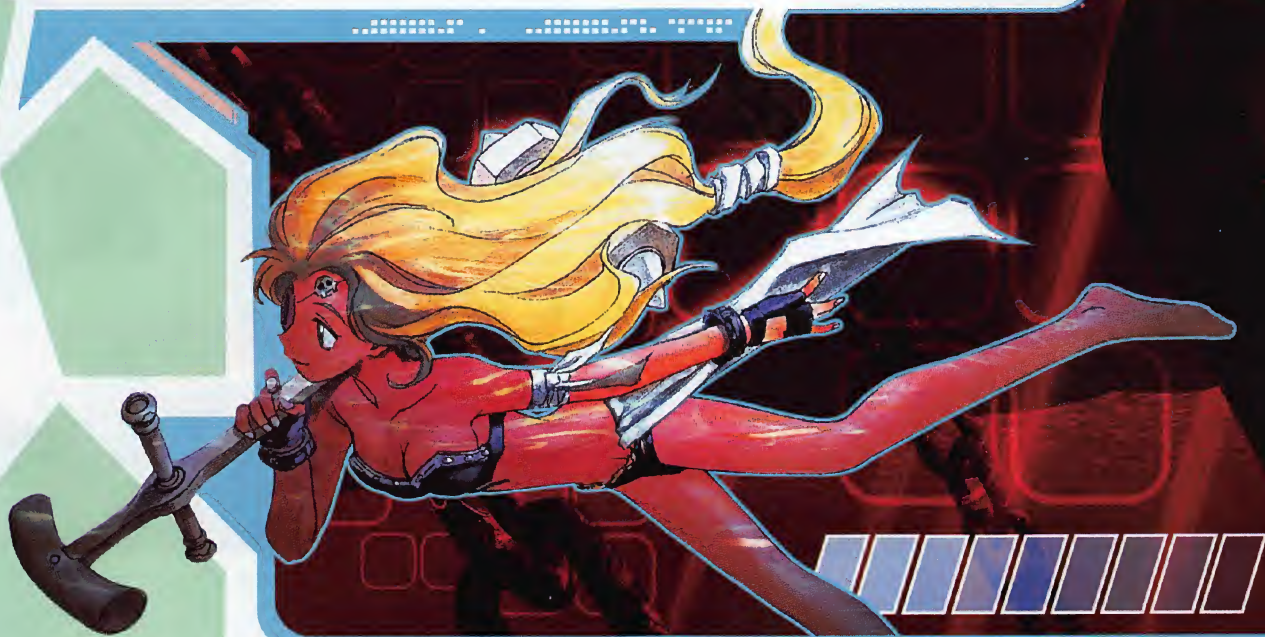
Gifts can be acquired through battle, or in one of the many shops that sell things that girls like. To date a girl you must first find a dating statue and then, after choosing your date, find a place to take her. Once you

arrive she'll ask you a series of questions. I suggest you go with your instincts, not Meis'. This element of the game may sound cheesy, but believe me, it's pretty cool. I found these little slices of life extremely welcome in the role-playing environment, especially given the often-sexy character designs (Wyla, whew!) and the fact that actual voice actors are used throughout. The women Meis meets range from sweet and petite to downright nasty and everything in between, and there's nothing like a little smooch before going into battle. There are also mini-games you can play to turn on the babes, if you so desire.

There's just so much to like about this game. The enemy character designs alone warrant massive discussions, as do so many of the events themselves. For instance, the entire trip on the Langoud—a monstrous sea-bearing craft piloted by Wyna's spirited father—is

unforgettable. When you sit down for dinner with him it's like you really get to know and like the guy. There are many such instances throughout the game. It's hard to say exactly which part of Thousand Arms I appreciate the most, but being a huge anime fan, the dialogue scenes certainly rank at the top. While I did admittedly find Meis spoken a bit timidly for how curt of a personality he has, and a few of the dialects and connotations a bit off, overall the speech added significantly to the entire experience. And the way that pivotal events transition from game into anime is fantastic—by far the best form of in-game communication I have come across. Each boss encounter, for example, is played out in dramatic fashion. You greet and speak with each one before battle commences, and when they are meant to be evil or mischievous, you really get the sense that they are. The many cut scenes that take us inside of the emperor's dark world are equally impressive, as are the altars that harness the Holy Flames. The first one is especially unforgettable.

I hope that there's a TA sequel so that I can see the next incarnation of this ingenious game design. Of course, whether or not there is relies a lot on you, the American RPG player. You certainly have a lot to choose from these days, but as someone who plays games for a living, take my word for it: in a world of me-too 3D RPGs, Thousand Arms stands out as the clear choice for your next conquest. ⚡



To make the pot even sweeter, Atlus is packing in a lenticular trading card, a 72-page four-color manual complete with an art section, a memory card sticker, and a special mail-in offer to receive a multimedia CD. It's loaded with art, icons, 14 redbook audio tracks, custom anime wallpaper, desktop themes, sound events from the game including outtakes, character profiles and more! So what are you waiting for? Help make this game a hit so that we can have another!

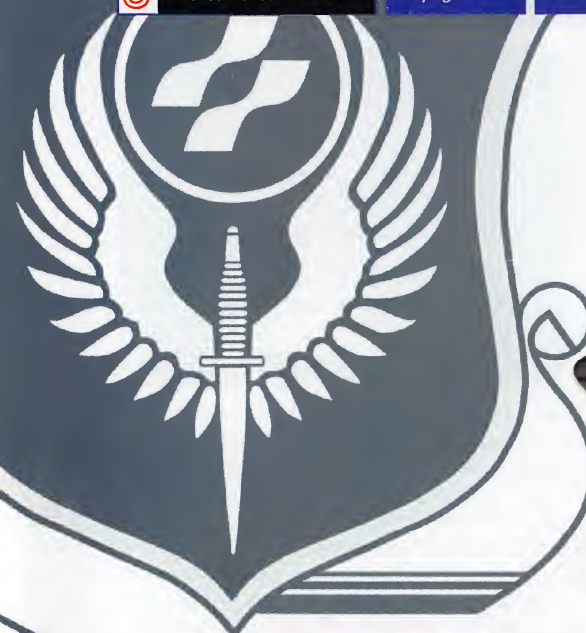
■ INNOVATIVE 2D FIGHTING AND CONVERSING
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REPUBLIC SAYS...

THOUSAND ARMS IS SURE TO PLEASE EVEN THE MOST BATTLE-WEARY RPG PLAYER WITH ITS EXCELLENT COMBINATION OF TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS.

A-



AIR FORCE DELTA

BY MIKE HOBBS

*Konami takes on Namco with its action flight sim.
Powerful Dreamcast environments and stellar missions save the day*



Konami has got to be sick of seeing the “Ace Combat” reference used in nearly every write-up of its first Dreamcast effort, the Ace Combat-ish Air Force Delta. But they shouldn’t fret, for this is what everyone was hoping for anyway, no? Provided you like the genre, what could be better than a game that played like Namco’s finest and boasted pretty DC visuals to boot? Well, I’m glad to report that Konami has indeed delivered a good-looking and -playing game, and were it not for a couple of missteps in the overall design, Air Force Delta might have even eclipsed its frequent print partner.

So just where did Konami slip up a bit in my opin-

ion? Mainly, they made dogfighting difficult to enjoy, and in an action flight sim, that’s a nasty place to make a mistake. What they’ve done is given you missiles that are far too ineffectual in airborne combat. In the normal mode (you don’t play on easy, do you?), at least half of the missiles that you feel could or should hit, don’t—very unsatisfying. You can lock on to a target from as much as 5,000 feet away, but it’s useless to fire from such a range; you’ve got to get within about 2,000 feet before even thinking about it. Once in range and on a fairly similar trajectory as your target, you find that the missiles are slow to react to the computer’s quick evasive maneuvers and will often just peter-out in an embarrassing display. In a game like this, missiles should feel powerful and destructive, not impotent and weak. Also, it’s too difficult to regulate your airspeed and you are almost always overshooting the enemies or stalling trying to stay behind them. A simple throttle-lock or target-speed-matching function would have made the airborne proceedings far more fun and appealing; having to constantly modulate the throttle while struggling to stay behind a highly maneuverable target simply isn’t satisfying. It adds a rather cumbersome element of challenge that needn’t be there. But to be fair, I can’t deny enjoying some sessions of dog fighting, I was simply too often cursing the sporadically



Beyond the advanced level of graphics, the highlight of Air Force Delta is the quality of the game’s many missions. Taking out a ballistic missile and slicing through a narrow ravine can be seen below.



KONAMI PRESENTS:
AIR FORCE DELTA

annoying parameters built into the game. Perhaps Ace Combat made it too easy by comparison, but it was more immediately pleasurable.

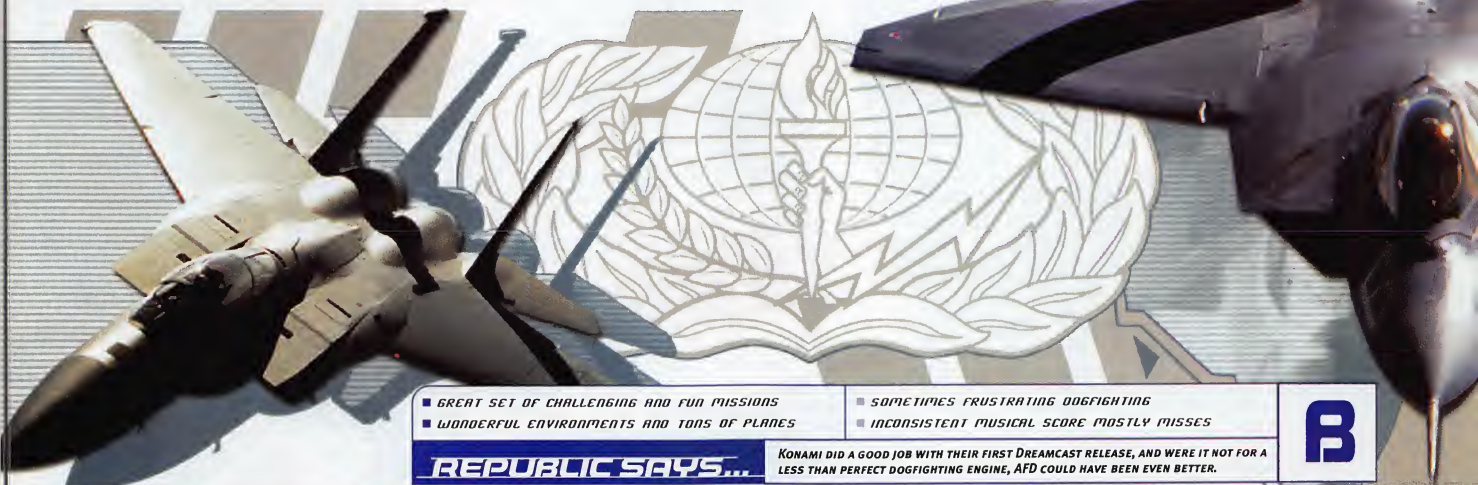
Lest I scare any players away from AFD, let me get to the good qualities of the game, which are not insubstantial. The graphics, save for some cheap-looking explosions, are great, with some environments being almost stunning in their level of ground-based detail.

The atmosphere in some levels is superb, with convincing overcast skies and warm sunset vistas. The distance may be fogged, but it's better than what we're used to from 32-bit. AFD also offers a broad selection of convincingly modeled planes to open up and use, running the gamut from F-22s to Harriers to obscure Russian models like the Su-34 Platypus.

What makes Air Force Delta well worth playing is a great set of missions. Irrespective of the annoying dogfighting, you'll really enjoy some of the tasks set before you: protecting a high-rise from a salvo of oncoming missiles, barnstorming through an enemy hangar carved into a mountain, blasting supplies

being airdropped from C5Bs, knocking solar panels off a falling satellite. The enemy opposition, both from the ground and the air, is relentless, adding a nice air of tension and proper challenge to the game.

So Konami messed up a bit. They still got a lot of Air Force Delta right. There's no shortage of planes or missions, and you can't turn a blind eye to the great-looking Dreamcast visuals. It's not quite broad enough in its appeal to completely convert players who never got into Ace Combat, but it's more than capable of delivering a few airborne thrills to just about anyone. Hunker down, target your enemies with care, and enjoy. >=



■ GREAT SET OF CHALLENGING AND FUN MISSIONS
■ WONDERFUL ENVIRONMENTS AND TONS OF PLANES

■ SOMETIMES FRUSTRATING DOGFIGHTING
■ INCONSISTENT MUSICAL SCORE MOSTLY MISSES

REPUBLIC SAYS...

KONAMI DID A GOOD JOB WITH THEIR FIRST DREAMCAST RELEASE, AND WERE IT NOT FOR A LESS THAN PERFECT DOGFIGHTING ENGINE, AFD COULD HAVE BEEN EVEN BETTER.

B



At 9:00 pm, an armed male attacked Doris on a New York City subway. She has never been the same since. . .

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"I would like to express my utmost gratitude to the staff who have put together this wonderful guidebook.

"Thank you very much."

Hideo Kojima
Creator and Director of Metal Gear Solid

You can see and order our Metal Gear Solid book online at www.gamersrepublic.com/mgs

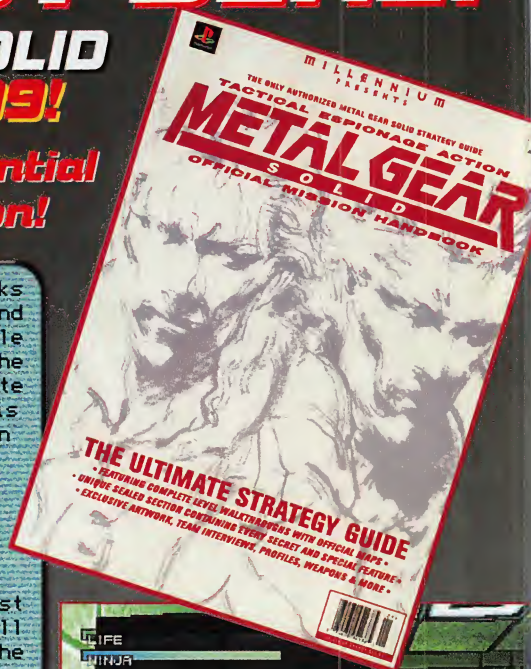
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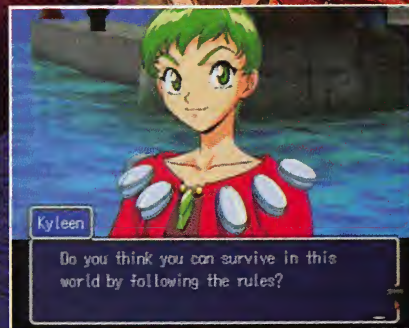


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"Thousand Arms fuses hand-drawn sprites, beautiful polygonal landscapes, and interactive anime cut scenes together with stunning results."
-Gamers Republic

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Final Fantasy 8

As in the past, Square has crafted scenes of astonishing visual power. Prepare for a world-spanning adventure through the past, present, and future

Some games you just play for fun. You enjoy them, but you can take them or leave them. You could quit in the middle of them if circumstances required.

Other games exert a stronger pull. Until you're done, there's no stopping for breath. Final Fantasy VII was a game like that. At some moment, early on, it grabbed you and never let go. For me, the moment was when Cloud came down the stairs (yes, that's not exactly what happened; I wouldn't want to ruin the surprise).

In Final Fantasy VIII, it

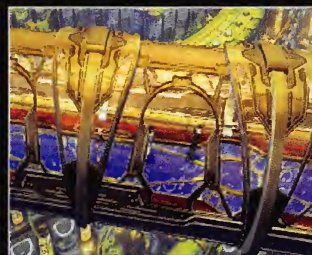
takes perhaps a little while longer for the moment to arrive, but arrive it does. Once that happens, you're off on a quest that takes everything that made VII great and adds ever so much more. If Square manages to top itself yet another time, we all may need seat belts.

FFVIII is set in a world like none you've ever seen before (unless you're much less conscientious than I concerning your chemical intake). There are touches of fantasy, but also much that is recognizably modern (or nearly modern), and futuristic concepts reminiscent of...well, nothing I can remember off the top of my head. The effect of this mixture is peculiar. It feels for a moment like somewhere you may have been, until you realize that it's obviously like nowhere you've ever been. This world is realized in pre-rendered backgrounds like those in FFI and the Resident

Evil games, but FFI's are of landmark quality. They are sharp, packed with detail, and sport touches like animation and parallax scroll.



The Guardian Force Pandemona, drawn from an enemy named Fujin. Those versed in Chinese mythology might get the joke.





The exquisitely detailed backgrounds help create a world apart from more traditional fantasies

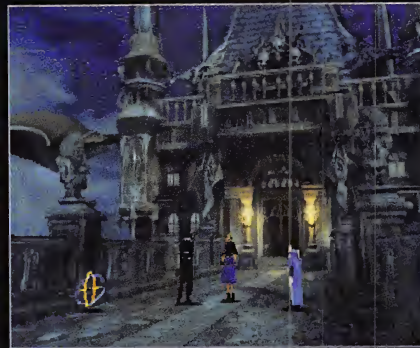
If you find FFXIII's world an unfamiliar one, you'll see yourself or someone like you in its cast. The lead, Squall Leonhart, is a "SeeD," one of the "combat specialists" of the Balamb Garden military academy. Perhaps you could say his story is of the discovery that he is much more than just a mercenary, just as we all are more than whatever we happen to do each day. But there's no point in getting unnecessarily maudlin, and that comes close to spoiling the story. It should be said, though, that FFXIII has survived its translation into English with its characterization intact. Everyone speaks in an individual voice, and there are flashes of the kind of wit some earlier Square RPGs desperately needed. The character designs, by Tetsuya Nomura, are in a style that blends together the fantasy of FFXII and the gritty realism of Parasite Eve. They look much more real than VII's iconic characters, which suits the game's more detailed, shaded story.

That story is told in part through the use of CG cutscenes, like those FFXII was so famous for. It's difficult to say much about the CG in XIII, though, without spoiling parts of the plot. It's best appreciated with no preconception of what to expect. I will say that I'm not surprised Square has decided to make its own feature film, because that's the next step to take from here. The smoothness and attention to detail are remarkable, surpassing anything I've seen in a video game.


FFXIII's musical accompaniment is, naturally, by Nobuo Uematsu, whose name has become synonymous over the years with Final Fantasy and superior game music. As I write this, word is making its way out of Japan that this may be his last bow as the composer for the series. If that is so, FFXIII is a fitting end to an impressive career. The game's music represents a wide array of styles, all superbly executed and well matched to the scenes it accompanies. If the flight theme this time out is a bit disappointing after the brilliant airship music in Xenogears, it's more than made up for by the platinum-certified remix of FFXII's Chocobo theme.

As your heroes make their way through their quest, there will be plenty of opposition to overcome. FFXIII's system of magic and combat is strikingly original, building on FFXII's minimalist approach. Your characters don't have arsenals of armor and equipment that need to be regularly updated. Instead, they have one upgradable weapon, an array of spells, and Guardian Forces. GFs are the summon monsters from earlier Final Fantasy games, and, as before, the summoning animations are breathtaking, but this time they are a much-more-important aspect of gameplay. Like FFXII's Espers, GFs can be attached, or "junctioned," to a character. This allows the character to summon the GF in battle, but there's far more to it





Some players criticized FFVII for being "too linear." Whether it was or not, FFVIII certainly

What makes FFVIII great overall is that it offers something new. Many recent RPGs have been, intentionally or otherwise, very similar to the genre's 8- and 16-bit forebears. FFVIII, on the other hand, invents and innovates in almost every area. Square still knows that now, as always, a good story, well told, about people you can grow to care for, is the key to a great role-playing game. Final Fantasy VIII is one of the PlayStation's brightest lights. 



ファイナルファンタジー VII

- FINAL FANTASY VIII IS ONE OF SQUARE'S BEST EVER. IT'S A MUST-BUY FOR RPG ENTHUSIASTS, AND A GREAT INTRODUCTION TO THE GENRE IF YOU HAVEN'T TRIED ONE YET.**



SUIKODEN II

BY BRADY FIECHTER

There's so much about Suikoden II that I find deeply appealing. I like the earthy colors that create a perfect medieval tone, and the distinct, expressive artwork of the characters. I like how the battles are brisk and simple, waged with a party of six rather than the typical three. I like the spirited musical score, which plays with unique styles and is sometimes layered in vocals. And perhaps more than anything else, I like how the game stays true to the original, embodying many of the same qualities that made it one of my favorite RPGs.

Spinning a tale of betrayal, political upheaval and social unrest, Suikoden II marches to the same epic beat that resonated sharply in the first game. Border disputes lead to a full-scale war, fueling an interesting story that trades in the arcane and mystical underpinnings of a typical RPG for more original conflicts. I appreciate an RPG that spends more time discovering characters and unfolding dialogue than wading through drawn-out battles and huge dungeons, and Suikoden II under-

stands the right balance.

Once again, battles place the sprite-based characters in 3D terrain, and, like most of the game, are essentially an improvement only on a graphical scale: spells look great, enemy design is solid, characters animate well. During integral moments in the story, battles turn into full-scale wars, fought against enemy lines in a very basic, strategy-game-like presentation. As the enemy is engaged, groups of little characters charge ahead, screaming high-pitched battle cries. While this idea could have been handled with more ambition, the game only benefits from its inclusion.

Obviously taking to heart the criticism that the first Suikoden was short and unsatisfying, Suikoden II's creators have ensured a strong 30 hours of adventure this time around, which just ends up bogging the game down—some scenes seem protractive. Fortunately, there is so much to like about Suikoden II—I was driven simply by the desire to befriend the 108 characters scattered across the land—that the down times are easy to look past. ✱



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■ ORIGINAL GAME'S MUSICIAN BACK, FANTASTIC SCORE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

WHILE I DON'T FEEL SUIKODEN II POSSESSES THE GREATNESS OF THE FIRST GAME, IT HAD ME THOROUGHLY IN ITS GRASP. THE CLASSIC RPG LOOK AND FEEL IS INVALUABLE.

B+



BY DAVE HALVERSON

LEGACY OF KAIN

SOUL REAVER

The face of Nosgoth has changed much since our last visit, as has the complexion of the game that brought us here. In *Blood Omen: Legacy of Kain*, our vampire lord was born of an innocent victim and, with the aid of the elder, sought revenge against human kind and the Serefan, gaining wisdom and encouragement at the pillars of Nosgoth. Raziel, as we know him, comes to us in much the same way. Struck down by his master, Kain, he comes to us after a millennium of damnation. After *Blood Omen*, Kain set his capital in the ruins of the Pillars of Nosgoth and began his conquest of the world. To aid him Kain snared six souls from the underworld and birthed six clans of vampire to serve him. Their domination was swift. All of the major human kingdoms fell within a hundred years, until humankind was but a side show—rogue vampire hunters and feed for the vampiric fledglings that scurried about in the shadows. As Kain and his vampires matured, they evolved into higher forms, with Kain always changing first. But when Raziel grew powerful wings before Kain, he became furious. After shredding their gaunt soft skin with his powerful claws, Kain, aided by the other clans, cast Raziel into the abyss where his melted, deformed body lay dormant for a millennium, until one fateful day.

The elder, whom you'll instantly recognize from *Blood Omen*, lay there as well, deprived of the souls that nourish him by Kain's vampire dynasties. As he did with Kain so long ago, the Elder makes a pact with Raziel: He may walk the Material Plain once again if he agrees to strike down his brethren, Lieutenants from the five remaining clans. If he will do this, he will be granted the chance to avenge himself against his master, Kain. How can he refuse?

And so the game begins. With gameplay that conjures memories of the original *Tomb Raider* and *Link's Awakening*, *Soul Reaver* draws the player into a vast, dark world laced with wicked puzzles and massive exploration. Let me begin by stating that Raziel himself is a joy to behold. The patter of his wide, flat feet mingles perfectly with his light, nimble feel. He





Redeemer, pon, messiah... Raziel. Revenge is even sweeter the second time around

reacts precisely, animates beautifully, and is colored masterfully. Watching him ascend, gliding spirally, is enchanting.

Reaching the keep of each clan, which is, in itself, often a challenge, you are presented with a series of complex tasks not suited for the mentally challenged. The manipulation between the Material and Spectral plain is key, but the main ingredient to reaching each slithering adversary is serious puzzle solving through the manipulation of Tomb Raider-esque blocks. If you're not patient and analytical of mind, you best play Soul Reaver in a padded room. In TR you simply slid blocks to and fro, but in Kain you'll flip, stack and use large quantities of blocks to a variety of different ends. I could write a chapter on this

element alone but, of course, space does not allow. These scenarios are extremely well thought out and very rewarding. Some of the mechanisms you put into play by successfully reconstructing disassembled rooms are extraordinary. Huge gears and ancient apparatuses tower all around you. One of the game's most spectacular feats has you reconstructing the pipes of a gigantic cathedral, redirecting the flow of air so that Raziel can ride their pillow thrust to its lofty summit. Think back to the feeling you got in Tomb Raider when Lara first entered a vast chamber full of possibilities and imagine this as the evil version, only taken to the next

CONTINUED ON
PAGE 122 ►



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■ UNFORGETTABLE AMBIDEX. EVIL HAS A NEW NAME
■ SUPERB VOICE ACTING CARRIES THE KAT TALE

■ VAST PUZZLES THAT PAY OFF BIG
■ GLYPH LEVELS MAKE KAIN HUGE. VAST REPLAY VALUE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

TOTALLY WORTH THE WAIT. MASSIVE EXPLORATION AND PUZZLE SOLVING HAS NEVER BEEN SO DIABOLICAL. YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH MURDER WHEN YOU'RE DEAD.

A-



You would think that with all the feverish hype surrounding Ready 2 Rumble, this flashy arcade-style boxing title would pack more punch. What promised to be a giant rumble of a game has turned out to produce a hollow whimper.

In some regards the game is a success, radiating enough mass appeal to reign in large packs of early Dreamcast owners beguiled by the game's slick exterior. Percolating with humorous personality, the boxers are beefy, colorful, and nicely animated, instantly likeable for that all-important universal charge. Who wouldn't crack a smile when a lanky Afro Thunder spastically wiggles his skinny limbs and bops his imposing afro? Or when a blubbery Salua Tua, residing from Oahu, uses his enormous belly for offense? Or the tempting Lulu Valentine, strutting around in a skin-tight suit, playfully intoning that "big things come in small packages"? Motion captured with good effect, the large cast of fighters speedily dart around the ring, throwing exaggerated punches and simple strings of combos, falling to the mat with a well-conceived string of dizzies, tips and falls.

Ready 2 Rumble cannot be accused of lacking style, but all the sheen begins to dull when you actually step in the ring for an extended period of time. A few fights is all it takes to grow weary of the simple, limp fighting method, which is too deliberate and conservative to be electrifying. Grant-



ed, the game is meant to be somewhat faithful to the sport of boxing - this is not meant to succeed as a deep fighting game - but it ultimately degenerates to clumsy pacing that never reaches a heightened satisfaction or intensity. With imprecise, airy collision, and an overall sense of detachment from the fighting, threat of losing interest in the game worsens as it fails to actively express the force and physics of the fighters and their punches.

Ready 2 Rumble will succeed more as a two-player experience, but taking to the ring solo is not without its moments: competition mode is a much-needed touch, allowing you to earn money in prize bouts and train a boxer in a handful of fun mini-games. It's almost enough to recommend this near-miss boxing game. ✨

READY 2 RUMBLE

BY BRADY FIECHTER



- NICELY ANIMATED CHARACTERS
- PACKS A LOT OF BRIGHT PERSONALITY

- PUNCHES LEAVE NO SENSE OF BRUTALITY AND FORCE
- LACKS INTENSITY; INITIAL WOW FACTOR IS FLEETING

REPUBLIC SAYS...

R2R IS AN ARCADE BOXER, ENJOYED MORE AS A TWO-PLAYER CONTEST. I DON'T FAULT ITS EMPHASIS ON EASE OF PLAY, BUT IT JUST NEEDS MORE CHARGE TO SUCCEED.





IT GIVES YOU A CHANCE TO FIGHT
BRAIN HUNGRY ZOMBIES

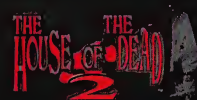
THE HOUSE OF THE DEAD 2

Sega Dreamcast

IT'S THINKING

APPARENTLY YOU'D RATHER SUCK HATCHET

new characters travel branching paths on 6 intense levels for ultimate replayability to confront over 20 kinds of mutants with hatchets, chainsaws and razor sharp teeth. check your shorts for cake. :: sega.com





SONIC ADVENTURE

BY BRADY FIECHTER

It took Sega five years to genuinely return to its mascot. Marvel at how far we've come since 16-bit days

The first level in Sonic Adventure offers one of the great moments in video games, where an enormous whale crashes through a winding pier as it pursues a fleeing Sonic. As the camera whips around, following Sonic as he races madly toward the screen, the whale splashes in and out of the water, dangerously close to catching up, but the intensely determined Sonic—the frigid expression on his face is priceless—is always one step ahead.

That first encounter with the charging whale left me laughing, delighted by the overwhelming energy of the moment—the sensational images of the sprawling beach, the kinetic camera, the thrilling speed by which Sonic traveled. I often return to Sonic Adventure, just to once again experience Emerald Coast and take a quick dip into a game that is so unlike anything else out there, a complete original that exists in an imaginative, gigantic, sparkling 128-bit universe.

Drawing from the spirit of its 16-bit ancestors, Sonic Adventure manages to maintain a classic tone and feel of Sonic of old, despite existing in a fully 3D setting. The driving force of the game is supercharged speed: Sonic whips around monstrous loops, launches off springs, darts through packs of enemies, blazes down walls and across ceilings. Playing the game is a roller coaster ride, and sometimes all you do is sit back and enjoy the rush as Sonic locks himself into stretches of manic sprints.

Indeed, this game is as much fun to look at as it is to play, but for all the great images the game throws at you, Sonic Adventure cannot be accused of being divorced from good gameplay. A few levels become more involving and deliberately paced than others, offering some nifty platforming elements, but soon enough, Sonic bears his soul, and we're off speeding down a slope with a snowboard or racing down a skyscraper.

At 12 levels long, the Sonic quest in the game is immensely satisfying, but Sonic Team chose to give the game even more legs, adding five additional characters, each with unique missions that are, surprisingly enough, a blast to play. Normally I balk at games that abandon the lead character by offering quests involving secondary figures, but Sonic



ONLY AVAILABLE FOR SEGA DREAMCAST

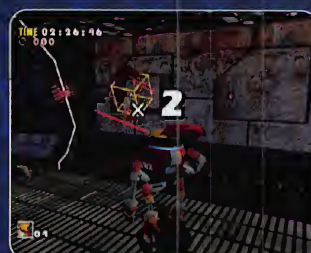


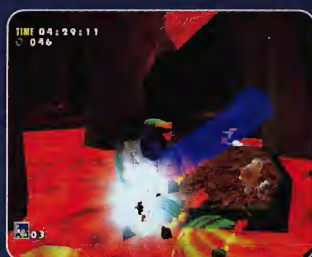
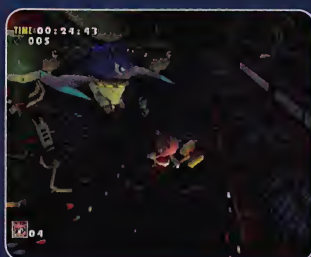
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SONIC

It never gets back, I've got no regrets
Cause I'm always I want for me
I should be got my own way





Sonic adventure, whatever its faults, is a treasure of a game—huge in scope, rich in imagination

Adventure handles its side cast marvelously: I loved fishing with Big the Cat, and the Tails adventure, during which you race against Sonic through a few of his levels, was a clever way to recycle old levels and make them feel worth playing again. A few levels actually take on an entirely new complexion: Knuckle's quest greatly expands the Casino level, revealing magnificent sites—a giant golden Sonic is bathed in a garish light show—as he scales to the top of a giant pirate ship nestled in the heart of the scintillating casino.

There are times while playing Sonic Adventure when I am compelled to stop and appreciate the many amazing sites. The screen is filled with little details, some nestled away in corners, some well off into the distance, all contained within a sprawling space—one the most sophisticated, grandly realized worlds in a video game.

Such an extraordinarily ambitious project from beginning to end, Sonic Adventure is understandably prone to problems, and, like the Japanese version, there are camera annoyances, occasional bugs, and the characters still like to magically fall through the floor. A few of the game's problems were addressed, but there remain pockets of sloppiness. And unfortunately, instead of subtitled, Sega of America employed desperate voice actors—Knuckles is a joke—and the syncing is, at times, way off the mark.

Never mind the low points. It's been a long time since a pure Sonic adventure has come our way, and, whatever its faults, here is a wondrous achievement that expresses the joy of gaming. Sonic's return has been worth the wait. ✱



■ THE SPIRIT OF 16-BIT SONIC IN A STRIKING 128-BIT WORLD
■ INCOMPARABLE SPEED, LOOK, AND FEEL

■ ENORMOUS SCOPE, SUCCESSFULLY CONCEIVED AND EXECUTED
■ SEGA HAS FINALLY REACHED THE TRUE NEXT LEVEL

REPUBLIC SAYS...

SONIC IS GRAND GAME MAKING. WITH INTERNET FEATURES, YOU CAN TRADE CHAO, DOWNLOAD SPECIAL FEATURES, UPLOAD SCORES AND RANKINGS. A HUGE SATISFYING LAUNCH TITLE.

A-



SOUL CALIBUR

BY BRADY FIECHTER



Namco shows the new vision of 3D game design, bestowing upon us a fighting-game masterpiece

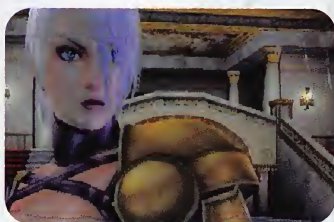
Still not sure whether a Dreamcast is worthy of your attention? Spend a few minutes in the presence of Soul Calibur, and you'll be a devout believer. This virtuoso weapons fighting game makes other home fighting games look grimly stunted, and for all its visual triumphs, Soul Calibur plays brilliantly.

Because the fighting system focuses on weapons combat, it inherently embodies a unique current of strategy, but Namco has, through a number of subtle touches, cultivated a game that feels truly original; this is not a retread of past fighting games. Of course, it does borrow from clas-

sic fighting-game design, but ultimately it is in a league of its own, which will become strikingly apparent the deeper you dig. Parrying and a deft command of the position of your fighter in 3D space are crucial to opening an opponent up for an attack, and there's such a multitude of moves to discover that each fight seems to reveal something new and exciting.

Finding and honing a new string of attacks is immensely rewarding, an addiction that keeps the learning curve on a steep climb. With a total of 19 fighters to choose from, many of them exhibiting an entirely unique





fighting style, there is a constant desire to learn and advance—a quality that I find eludes so many games. Part of this draw to the game is its ability to channel such uncommon realism into the fighters: the way they feel, the manner in which they pitch their weight, strike with their weapons and move about the ring. Commanding a daunting giant like Asteroth is awesome, his huge body an almost tangible presence; and a tiny, quick character like Taki exhibits remarkable grace and

agility, an almost spirit-like quality.

The delicate balance of gameplay and striking graphics drives Soul Calibur into classic territory, but I believe that the game will ultimately leave its mark with its incredible graphics. For its extraordinary images alone, the game is intriguing, and I sometimes find myself enjoying it as a bystander as much as a player. Indisputably the finest models created for a home video game, the main attraction is the characters - they move with compelling, graceful, flowing realism, and muscles flex, veins pop, faces emote, hair and clothing blow in the wind. Housing the battles, amazing textures and rich designs build extravagant, beautifully conceived backdrops that extend far into the distance. Torches, sunlight and other sources of illumination cast natural glows over the characters, who themselves give off brilliant weapon streaks and sparks. Rats run into the shadows, puffs of dust rise off the ground, fog rolls off water. This game really must be seen.

Much of Soul Calibur's effect is powered by the obvious, but so many subtle touches feed the overall experience. A bold, symphonic score inflates the ambience, and superb sound effects from weapon contact and character growls deepen the immersion factor. Listen closely, and you'll even notice a hollow resonance from foot taps on wooden platforms.

There is such a generous attention to detail paid to every aspect of Soul Calibur; the game is a labor of love. It's the work of artists who have given me a fighting game that has no equal. ✨



■ CHARACTER DESIGNS ARE A WORK OF ART
■ AWESOME 3-D BACKGROUNDS

■ FAST TO PICK UP, FOREVER TO MASTER
■ THE COPIOUS EXTRAS ARE INVALUABLE

REPUBLIC SAYS...

I'VE PLAYED SOUL CALIBUR FOR A MONTH NOW, AND MY APPRECIATION FOR THE GAME ONLY CONTINUES TO DEEPEN.

A+



"...one of this year's



LUNAR

SILVER STAR STORY

COMPLETE

"...a must buy for RPGers!"

— EGM

"...wonderfully illustrated in a pure anime style."

— PSM

"...a huge epic quest..."

— Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine

"...a godsend."

— Gamers' Republic



must-play RPGs." — EGM



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Our games go to 11!™



OMEGA BOOST

• developer: polyphony digital • publisher: sony • available: now



Like a trashy airport novel or a big-budget action movie, there comes a time when a gamer simply craves the empty thrill of a good shooter. Indeed, what can be better than tossing aside all concerns other than the ceaseless destruction that the best examples of the genre provide? Sony's Omega Boost delivers on just this sort of promise. Developed by Polyphony Digital, the makers of Gran Turismo, this game dutifully fulfills its three primary responsibilities: to look good, control well, and give you lots to shoot at.

Graphically, this isn't the sort of shooter that wins you over with its environments. The three varieties of background here are deep space, planet surface, and tunnel, and all are rather unremarkable. Instead, it's the quality and quantity of the enemy craft that give Omega Boost a strong visual identity. From the brilliantly animated mech that you control to the scores of targets drifting through your sights, there are some amazing-looking moments in this game.

I'm not going to claim that Omega Boost is better overall than Panzer Dragoon II—surely one of the best 3D shooters of all time—but it is a more kinetic, engaging experience. Credit part of this to the fact that you've got some freedom of movement here in all but the tunnel levels and aren't stuck on a fixed path. You're still restricted, but you're restricted spherically, and this allows you to stop and turn in place, jet forward, and even circle some of the larger enemies. Targets are always approaching you, but at least there's the ability to move around them a bit.

Like many shooters, Omega Boost is too short and too easy, making it good for a quick fix between larger games, and not too much else. But that takes nothing away from its addictiveness, quality of play and excellent graphics. It's a beautiful, hollow thrill, and that's all a good shooter needs to be. >X=



TNN HARDCORE HEAT

• developer: csk • publisher: asc games • available: now



ASC didn't have to go far to convince me on this one. Picking up the import, CSK's choice off-road racer, Buggy Heat, and quickly slapping the TNN brand on it for visibility, then performing some minor tweaks, ASC's got an instant U.S. launch title with graphical prowess and playability to burn. My main concern with this port was that along with the TNN brand would come the hoe-down like feeling I get whenever I hear the words "TNN Motorsports." Thankfully, however, ASC has left all of the game's best traits intact. Short of rearranging some textures (granted, theirs are somewhat budget-looking compared to what used to be there) and re-recording the voice to be even more annoying and out of place, they've left well enough alone. The result is one of the best off-road racers I've played for some time, and for many reasons. First and foremost, the game looks stunning. There is never any clipping, the textures are drop-dead gorgeous and the replays boggle the mind. The whole thing is just so solid. Even more so than Rally or Tokyo Extreme, this game, in my opinion, is the shape of things to come, at least things with steering wheels. The vast, realistic vehicle characteristics carry over into the game exactly as they should. Although I use the Avalanche rally car exclusively (after much analysis), each has distinct advantages and disadvantages based on weight vs. displacement, etc. As for the courses themselves, although I feel some are too short, they are equally impressive. Beyond the presence of varied terrain is the actual feel that results from each type. Gravel reacts like gravel and the same goes for loose or deep sand, snow, street and mud. Cars even get dirty as they race, and the drivers animate realistically—shifting, braking, steering, you name it. Add to this all sorts of customizing options and all the modes you could ask for, and you've got yourself one hell of an off-road racer. More and a few longer tracks would have been nice, but who's complaining? It's a launch title! ⚡



Between a Sinister World of Shadow
And a Dangerous Dimension of Fantasy
Lies a Twisted Battle for Reality



Twitch Games
Nothing Else!



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No, I didn't Photoshop the Hilfiger logo onto the yellow GBC unit below. Nintendo's hooked up with the fashion designer to release a limited number of these, available for \$57.50, but only if you've purchased \$50 worth of Tommy's goods. Still, I know people who purchased the Nautica Nissan Quest, so I guess there's a market. More importantly, though, is the bevy of (mostly) great games this month. Check it out...



MARIO GOLF

While Nintendo was here with Jet Force Gemini, they let it slip that they had an early version of Mario Golf along as well, so after much begging, pleading, and cajoling (and perhaps a payoff of some sort...) they let me steal back to my office to try out this gem. Developed by Camelot, the folks who brought us Hot Shots Golf on PS and Mario Golf on N64, they have modified their proven golf engine for the mini-screen. We get an overhead view of each hole with full camera control to search for the best shots on those par 5s, and combined 3D and overhead views during the fairway shots. Shots are controlled just as in the console games, and while the greens can't have the same level of detail as the big brothers' versions, there's enough indication of hills and valleys to allow for precise shots.

But most amazing is that Camelot has done the previous versions one better by creating what I consider a "Golf RPG" mode. Create a new character, and you'll start at the clubhouse, where you'll meet other golfers who will impart golfing wisdom to help improve your skills. You start with no experience points, but as you train on the putting green, driving range, etc., you'll soon be prepared to enter the tournaments at the four courses included in the game. More experience results in higher skill scores, which allow for longer drives and better placement of balls. If you can beat the pros at each course, you'll be given a seat in the lounge and a chance to challenge the golfing legend, Mario!

That Camelot got their game engine tucked into that little cartridge is amazing; that they've added an entirely new level of playing beyond the consoles is astounding. I can't wait for a reviewable copy! Look out, Mario, I've got a birdie for you... ☼



GAME BOY COLOR OUTPOST

CAESAR'S PALACE 2

This game came in just as I was leaving on a road trip to Vegas, so I used it as an hors d'oeuvre to feed my gambling appetite on the way. With 19 different games like Blackjack, Roulette, Slots, and Video Poker and odds and payouts set to the same standards that Caesar's Palace uses, it has the mechanics down. You start with \$2000 and try to make enough cash to be granted access to the high-rollers areas. But the game doesn't take

INTERPLAY
AVAILABLE NOW

advantage of the GBC's power, the interface is rather clumsy, and besides, there's no cocktail waitresses, no banter with the dealers, no cigarette smoke, and no real money in my hand, and moreover the music is maddeningly simple. A decent taste, yes, and everything's there that can be, but it just ain't Vegas. C ☼



LUCKY LUKE

INFOGRADES
AVAILABLE NOW

Finally! A GBC game with good effects that isn't full of cute blue people! Hot off of his totally non-existent stint on the PlayStation, Lucky Luke has moseyed onto the GBC where he'll more than likely win the respect of handheld lovers everywhere. Set in the wild-west, this game's a real hoot. Packed with enough tumble weeds, banditos, Indians, and pistolas a-firing to keep you up till the

AA's are drained, this is not your average GBC

game. Besides utilizing the GBC's new hardware features (at least part of the time), Luke's 2D gameplay—a clever mix of shooting, platforming, and just a bit of puzzle solving—is complimented by excellent bonus rounds and stage-coach chases complete with parallax and big-time line scrolling. The music's quite good (considering the platform) as well. Lucky Luke's definitely one of the better GBC games to appear so far in the GBC's currently unimpressive but burgeoning lineup. B ☼



GAME BOY COLOR



follow the leader
in portable fun!



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COUNTER + POINT



Aero Wings • CRI • Crave

As Reviewed By Dave Halverson

AERO WINGS WILL LIKELY FIND A HOME WITH EITHER FIRST-TIME CONSOLE OWNERS (THE DC WILL LIKELY RECRUIT A FEW, HUH?) OR AIRCRAFT AFICIONADOS. IT DOES WHAT IT DOES VERY WELL.



■ CREDIT THIS GAME FOR TRYING SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

■ BUT THE APPEAL IS JUST TOO LIMITED.

Brady Fiechter:

C

CERTAINLY THE MOST ESOTERIC GAME ON DREAMCAST, AERO WINGS IS A FLIGHT SIMULATOR IN THE TRUEST SENSE: YOU HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OVER YOUR PLANE, RIGHT DOWN TO THE FLAPS, AIR BRAKES, AND LANDING GEAR. THE OBJECT OF THE GAME IS TO BECOME SKILLED IN THE TECHNIQUES OF FLYING A VARIETY OF POWERFUL JET PLANES, WHILE MANEUVERING THROUGH LOOPS AND PERFORMING TRICK FORMATION FLYING; ACTION IS NOT IN AERO WINGS' REPERTOIRE. A SOARING SENSATION OF FLIGHT CAN BE ALMOST DIZZING AT TIMES, BUT IT'S JUST NOT ENOUGH TO JUMPSTART AERO WINGS' BENIGN, NARROW NATURE.



■ SOLID GRAPHICS AND A REALISTIC AND SATISFYING FLIGHT MODEL MARK THIS ACTION-FREE FLYER

■ HIGHLY SPECIALIZED GAMEPLAY WON'T SUIT THE AVERAGE GAMER

Mike Hobbs:

B-

THIS ISN'T A GAME FOR EVERYONE. THERE'S NOTHING TO DESTROY, NO HOSTAGES TO RESCUE, NO WORLD DOMINATION SCHEME TO THWART. AERO WINGS CHARGES YOU WITH THE TASK OF MASTERING THE ART OF FORMATION FLYING, A HIGHLY UNIQUE CONCEPT HANDLED VERY WELL HERE. IT'S QUITE DIFFICULT, AND UNLESS YOU'RE INTO AVIATION ENOUGH TO GET A KICK OUT OF CONTROLLING YOUR LANDING GEAR AND SETTING FLAP ANGLES, YOU MIGHT BE FRUSTRATED AND BORED. I FOUND IT ADDICTIVE, GAINING SATISFACTION FROM STAYING IN A COMPLEX PATTERN AND ENJOYING THE REALISTIC-FEELING FLIGHT MODEL. MORE OFTEN THAN NOT, I WAS WAY OUT OF FORMATION, BUT THE DESIRE TO GET IT NEAT AND TIDY WAS STRONG. CHECK ASPIRATIONS FOR DESTRUCTION AT THE DOOR, AND ENJOY.



Air Force Delta • Konami • Konami

Originally Reviewed By Mike Hobbs (page 56)

IT'S NOT QUITE BROAD ENOUGH IN ITS APPEAL TO COMPLETELY CONVERT PLAYERS WHO NEVER GOT INTO ACE COMBAT, BUT IT'S MORE THAN CAPABLE OF DELIVERING A FEW AIRBORNE THRILLS TO JUST ABOUT ANYONE.



■ THE JETS LOOK AWESOME, AND THE TERRAIN IS FULL AND DETAILED.

■ I WANTED MORE VALLEYS, CAVES AND ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTS TO MANEUVER THROUGH.

Brady Fiechter:

B-

FORGET THE PEACEFUL FORMATION FLYING OF AERO WINGS; HERE'S THE JET COMBAT GAME THAT PACKS SOME ACTUAL CHARGE. IT CAN'T TOUCH THE THRILLS OF NAMCO'S ACE COMBAT, BUT AIR FORCE DELTA IS A SUCCESS IN ITS OWN RIGHT, DELIVERING ENOUGH ACTION AND INTENSITY TO HOOK ME FROM THE SECOND I TOOK TO THE SKIES. AND WHAT LOVELY SKIES THESE ARE, PAINTED WITH LAYERS OF CONVINCING CLOUDS AND SOAKED IN A NATURAL GLOW FROM THE SUN. ON THE GROUND, THE TERRAIN IS ALWAYS IMPRESSIVE, ABUNDANT WITH DETAILED CITYSCAPES, MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, BATTLESHIPS AND HUGE MOUNTAIN RANGES. OVERALL, AIR FORCE DELTA HANDLES EVERY ASPECT OF ITS DESIGN FORMIDABLY, FALLING SHORT ONLY IN ITS INABILITY TO FULLY EXPAND ON ITS IDEAS.



■ PLENTY OF PLANES AND A DECENT VARIETY IN MISSIONS KEPT ME PLAYING

■ NOT ENOUGH VARIETY IN WEAPONS CHOICES, AND EFFECTS WERE SOMEWHAT LACKLUSTER

Dave Smith:

B-

AIR FORCE DELTA TICKLED MY FONDNESS FOR COMBAT AIRCRAFT, BUT IF YOU DON'T HAVE A FETISH-ISTIC INTEREST IN THAT SORT OF THING, AFD MIGHT TURN YOU OFF. THE PLANES, ESPECIALLY THE EXPERIMENTAL JETS LIKE THE BERKUT AND THE BLACK WIDOW, LOOK GREAT, AND MANY OF THE MISSIONS ARE QUITE INNOVATIVE, BUT THE DIFFICULTY GETS VERY STIFF VERY QUICKLY AND THE GAMEPLAY ISN'T TOO DEEP. MORE VARIETY IN WEAPONS (GUNS ARE PRETTY USELESS, AND I WOULD HAVE LIKED AT LEAST TWO KINDS OF MISSILES), MORE EXCITING DOGFIGHTS, AND FAIRER OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE MADE AFD MORE THAN JUST AVERAGE. AS IT IS, RENT IT FIRST.



Blitz 2000 • Visual Concepts • Sega

Reviewed By Mike Griffin

BLITZ 2000 IS BASICALLY THE ARCADE GAME AT HOME. THE DC VERSION BENEFITS FROM HI-RES GRAPHICS, AWESOME SPEEDS, FAST FRAME RATES, AND THE ABSENCE OF LOAD TIMES THAT SO PLAGUED THE OTHER CONSOLES.



■ CARBON COPY OF ARCADE BLITZ AT HOME.

■ OUTRAGEOUS TACKLES, INSANE SPEEDS, EXCELLENT MULTI-PLAYER KICKS.

Brady Fiechter:

B-

MAKE NO MISTAKES: BLITZ IS A PARTY GAME. ITS CHAOTIC, UNINHIBITED, SCREW-THE-RULES BRAND OF FOOTBALL IS THE CONSUMMATE ATTRACTION FOR HOURS OF REALISTIC COMPETITIONS, AND YOU DON'T EVEN NEED TO ENJOY FOOTBALL TO TRY YOUR HAND AT THIS ENERGETIC GAME. OF COURSE, THIS IS NOT A SIMULATION OF THE GREAT SPORT OF FOOTBALL, BUT BLITZ 2000 IS ALMOST TOO SHALLOW TO HOLD MY INTEREST AS A SINGLE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE, AND IT WOULD DEFINITELY BENEFIT FROM A SHARPER ENGINE. IT'S ESSENTIALLY ARCADE-PERFECT—CLEAN, FAST BUT CHUNKY. AT LEAST MIDWAY CHOSE TO ADD A CREATE-YOUR-OWN PLAY OPTION. NEXT YEAR, I EXPECT A NEW FACE TO THE SERIES.



■ GRAPHICS, SOUND, AND CONVENIENCE.

■ TWO-PLAYER MATCH-UPS ARE THE ONLY WAY TO GO FOR TRUE EXCITEMENT.

Tom Stratton:

C+

WITH ALL OF THE EXTRA POWER MIDWAY HAD TO PORT THIS TITLE, I AM A BIT TORN. I GET A CLONE OF THE ARCADE GAME AT HOME. OKAY. BUT NOW THAT I HAVE INVESTED MUCH MORE THAN LEFTOVER LAUNDRY MONEY AND AM SITTING COMFORTABLY ON MY COUCH, I AM OBVIOUSLY GOING TO SPEND MORE THAN THE TWENTY-FIVE OR THIRTY MINUTES I WOULD HAVE SPENT WHILE AT THE ARCADE. WHAT DO I GET TO KEEP MY INTERESTS? WHAT DO I NEED—TO SPEND MORE MONEY FOR A SECOND CONTROLLER TO PROLONG ITS LONGEVITY? IT JUST SEEMS THAT ADDING A RUSHING-PLAYS-ONLY TASK, SCORE-IN-THREE-PLAYS OBJECTIVE OR SOMETHING EXTRA FOR ONE-PLAYER EXCURSIONS COULD HAVE EASILY BEEN DONE TO ADD TO THE EXPERIENCE.



Gauntlet Legends • Midway



As Reviewed By pooch doggy dog

PROBABLY THE BEST PORT OF A CLASSIC GAME I'VE SEEN FOR THE NINTENDO 64 THUS FAR. MIDWAY HAVE PUT A LOT OF MEAT ON GAUNTLETS NOW WEARY BONES. IT'S EVERYTHING YOU LOVED, BROUGHT UP TO DATE. VERY NICE.

B+



- BEAUTIFUL CAVES, CLIFFS AND OTHER ENCHANTING LOCALES LOOK GREAT.
- NICE ANIMATION, GREAT MUSIC, AND RAM PAK-ENHANCED GRAPHICS KEEP YOU HACKING AND SLASHING.

Dave Halverson:

B

MIDWAY HAS REALLY DRESSED UP GAUNTLET WELL, WITH AN IMPRESSIVE NEW HUB, LUSH, TIERED LOCALES, SMOOTH ANIMATION, WICKED SPELLS AND MASSIVE BOSSES. THE GAMEPLAY HAS REMAINED PRETTY FAITHFUL OTHERWISE (SEAL PORTALS AND LAY WASTE TO HORDES OF SPOOKS, COLLECT AND STRATEGICALLY USE ITEMS, ETC.) BUT IT'S MARKEDLY BETTER IN 3D, ESPECIALLY IN MULTIPLAYER MODE, WHICH IS REALLY THE WAY THIS GAME IS MEANT TO BE PLAYED. THE VISUALS BENEFIT GREATLY USING THE RAM PAK, IT HAS A GREAT GOTHIC SOUNDTRACK, AND IS VASTLY DIVERSE AND SCENIC FOR THOSE TWO- TO FOUR-PLAYER ALL NIGHTERS. THIS IS THE WAY TO REDO A CLASSIC!



- A UNIQUE BRAND OF FOUR-PLAYER ACTION THAT FEELS FRESH ON THE N64.
- SURPRISINGLY CLOSE TO THE 3D-FX POWERED COIN-OP.

Mike Hobbs:

B

THIS IS A GOOD APPROXIMATION OF THE ARCADE GAME, AND IT MAKES FOR GREAT MULTIPLAYER SESSIONS AT HOME. THE WELL-HANDLED THEME AND FOUR-PLAYER SIMULTANEOUS ACTION MAKE IT RATHER UNIQUE ON THE N64, AS I CAN THINK OF NO OTHER GAME QUITE LIKE IT. UNFORTUNATELY, THE ONE-PLAYER EXPERIENCE FEELS A LITTLE POINTLESS; TAKING ON WAVE AFTER WAVE OF ENEMIES QUICKLY GROWS TIRESOME. THE GAME IS ONLY TRULY ALIVE WHEN TWO OR MORE FRIENDS ARE PLAYING ALONG, AND UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES, GAUNTLET SHINES. ALSO, THE LUDICROUSLY BOOMING VOICE IS BEST ENJOYED AS A GROUP.



Monaco Grand Prix • ubisoft • ubisoft



Reviewed By Edd Fear

ON TV, I PREFER NASCAR RACES OVER THE F1s, PROBABLY BECAUSE I CAN SEE MYSELF IN A TAURUS MORE THAN A McLAREN. BUT WITH MGP, UBI'S HOOKED ME IN. WHO KNEW I'D EVEN TRY THE MANUAL TRANNY?

B



- SO MUCH BETTER THAN FLAG TO FLAG, THERE IS SIMPLY NO COMPARISON.
- A PERSONAL BEEF, BUT I REALLY WANTED THE F1 LICENSE HERE.

Mike Hobbs:

B

THIS GAME'S BEEN IMPROVED SOMEWHAT OVER ITS ORIGINAL JAPANESE RELEASE, AND THE CHANGES ONLY ADD TO THE SUPERIORITY OF MONACO OVER THE ABYSMAL FLAG TO FLAG. GRANTED, THE TWO GAMES REPRESENT VASTLY DIFFERENT FORMS OF MOTOR RACING, BUT IN EVERY SUBJECTIVE CATEGORY, MONACO IS MILES AHEAD. HERE YOU GET TO CONTEND WITH THE HIGHLY TECHNICAL FORMULA 1 COURSES INSTEAD OF FTF'S MINDLESS OVALS, AND ARE TREATED TO A FAR-SUPERIOR ENGINE WITH AN INCREDIBLE DRAW DISTANCE. THE ONLY THING MONACO LACKS IS A LICENSE FOR THE TEAMS AND DRIVERS OF FORMULA 1, BUT SINCE AN UNFORTUNATELY SMALL NUMBER OF AMERICANS ACTUALLY FOLLOW THE SPORT, THIS WON'T BE MISSED BY MOST.



- MONACO'S LOADED WITH EVERY OPTION AND MODE UNDER THE SUN. THIS GAME PUTS FLAG TO FLAG IN THE TOILET.
- EVERYTHING THAT HELD THE IMPORT BACK HAS BEEN TWEAKED TO PERFECTION. THE DEFINITIVE F1 EXPERIENCE.

Dave Halverson:

B+

BACK WHEN THE GENESIS REIGNED SUPREME, I'LL NEVER FORGET THE COUNTLESS HOURS I SPENT PLAYING THE ORIGINAL MONACO GP. SINCE, ONLY ONE GAME HAS EVEN COME CLOSE TO RE-IGNITING MY DESIRE TO REALLY GET INTO AN F1 RACER, AND COINCIDENTALLY, IT WAS ALSO A PORT BY UBI SOFT, F1 POLE POSITION FOR THE N64. UBI ALWAYS TWEAK THEIR ACQUISITIONS TO PERFECTION, AND HAVE DONE SO AGAIN WITH MONACO GP FOR THE DC, THE NEW BENCHMARK FOR F1 ARCADE AND SIMULATION RACING. WHAT WAS A GOOD IMPORT IS NOW A NEAR-GREAT U.S. LAUNCH TITLE WITH TWEAKS IN JUST ABOUT EVERY FACET OF THE GAME. IT'S ALL HERE, FOLKS: EVERY MODE, EVERY TEAM, ALL THE TUNING ELEMENTS, GOOD MUSIC, GREAT CAMERA OPTIONS, AND ALL THE TRACKS YOU KNOW AND LOVE. A MUST FOR F1 FANS.



Jet Moto 3 • Pacific Coast P & L/989 • scea



Reviewed By: Edd Fear

I WASN'T EXACTLY WILD ABOUT JET MOTO 2, HAVING ENJOYED THE ORIGINAL SO MUCH. I WAS HOPING THAT 3 WOULD REMEDY THE PROBLEMS, RETURNING TO THE ORIGINAL FORMULA. UNFORTUNATELY, IT SEEMS TO HAVE ALL GONE WRONG.

D



- IT'S FAST, BUT IT LOOKS AWFUL
- RACING IS HAPHAZARD AND THE TRACK DESIGN AND MUD-DINESS DISCOMBOLATE

Brady Fiechter:

D-

"FOLLOW THE RAGING APACHE RIVER THROUGH A DEEP RED ROCK CANYON. BEAUTIFUL WATERFALLS, SERENE LAKES, AND WONDROUS RAPIDS ARE JUST DYING TO SLAM YOU INTO A WALL." SO READS THE INTRODUCTION TO DEVIL'S CANYON, THE FIRST OF MANY TRACKS YOU WILL ENCOUNTER IN JET MOTO 3 THAT ARE NOT BEAUTIFUL, SERENE, OR WONDROUS. AND IT'S NOT THE RAPIDS THAT SLAM YOU INTO THE WALL, BUT YOUR OWN CONFUSION—THE RACING IS SO HAPHAZARD THAT A TRACKING ARROW HAD TO BE IMPLEMENTED TO LEAD THE WAY—AND LACK OF CONTROL OF YOUR CHAOTICALLY UNSTABLE HOVER BIKE. I'M NOT SURE WHICH IS WORSE: THE GAME ITSELF OR THE OPENING CINEMA THAT SHAMELESSLY FLASHES THE PRODUCT PLACEMENT.



- JET MOTO? ARE YOU SURE? I DON'T THINK SO
- PACIFIC COAST POWER & LIGHT MAY KILL TWO GREAT RACING SERIES IN THE SAME YEAR!

Dave Halverson:

D

THIS MONTH'S BLUE LIGHT SPECIAL HAS GOT TO BE JET MOTO 3. NONE OF THE FIXES I HOPED FOR WHEN I PREVIEWED THE GAME LAST MONTH MADE THE FINAL CUT AND THE RESULT IS A TOTALLY NONSENSICAL RACER THAT'S TOO FAST FOR ITS OWN GOOD. THE GAME IS SIMPLY OUT OF CONTROL. IT'S POORLY BALANCED, FULL OF GLITCHY VISUALS, AND RIDDLED WITH JITTERY TEXTURES FAR BEYOND THE NORMAL PS RACER. THE BIKES BOUNCE AROUND LIKE PING-PONG BALLS AND ANY FEELING OF HOVERING IS OUT THE WINDOW. I CAN SEE WHERE THE DESIGNERS WERE TRYING TO GO, SORT OF, BUT IN THE END I WISH THEY WOULD HAVE LEFT WELL ENOUGH ALONE.



COUNTER + POINT



Metal Gear Solid: VR Missions • Konami • Konami

As Reviewed by Dave Halverson

VR MISSIONS IS A GREAT DISC FOR DIE HARD MGS FANS AND ITS PRICED ACCORDINGLY. IF IT'S KONAMI'S WAY OF KEEPING THE MGS CANDLE BURNING UNTIL NEXT TIME... I'M GOOD WITH IT. NOW GIVE ME CASTLEVANIA SOTN VR MISSIONS!



- IF YOU WERE COMPELLED BY MGS'S VR MISSIONS, HERE'S YOUR GAME
- I SEE THIS AS A SIDE PROJECT, A COLLECTION OF SPARE PARTS FROM A REAL GAME

Brady Fiechter:

C+

METAL GEAR SOLID WAS A MASTERPIECE, AND, MORE IMPORTANT FOR KONAMI, A MASTER MONEY MAKER. RELEASING A BUNDLE OF VR MISSIONS IS GOING TO LULL A GOOD NUMBER OF MGS FAITHFULS INTO ADDING TO KONAMI'S PROFITS—BUT YOU CAN COUNT ME OUT OF THAT CROWD. YES, I LOVE METAL GEAR SOLID, BUT EVEN TO THIS DAY I HAVE NEVER ONCE EXPLORED THE ORIGINAL VR MISSIONS, AND HAVING A COLLECTION OF OVER 300 IN THIS DISC IS NOT ENOUGH TO SPARK MY ENTHUSIASM. WHILE THERE IS A GREAT VARIETY AND A DEEP CHALLENGE LEVEL TO BEATING THE TIMED MISSIONS, IN THE END, A GAME WITHOUT PAYOFF, WITHOUT A WORLD TO EXPLORE AND DISCOVER, LEAVES ME EMPTY.



- A STAGGERING NUMBER OF MISSIONS AND A HIGH ADDICTION FACTOR FOR THE MGS FAITHFUL
- NOT FOR THOSE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES ONLY CASUAL FANS OF MGS

Mike Hobbs:

B-

WELL, IT'S NOT A NEW METAL GEAR GAME, BUT VR MISSIONS PROVIDES PLENTY OF MGS-STYLE ACTION. THERE ARE LITERALLY HUNDREDS OF CHALLENGES HERE, FROM BASIC WEAPONS TRIALS TO TRICKY PUZZLE-BASED STAGES. SOME OF THE MISSIONS ARE SUPREMELY ADDICTIVE, AND TRYING TO EARN A FIRST-PLACE SCORE DURING TIME TRIAL CAN BECOME AN ALMOST UNHEALTHY PURSUIT. ALSO, GETTING TO PLAY AS THE NINJA IN SOME LEVELS (WITH REQUISITE CLOAKING) WILL BE AN UNDENIABLE THRILL FOR MGS FANS. BUT WITH SO MANY MISSIONS, THE GAME TENDS TO WEAR OUT ITS WELCOME SOMEWHAT, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE THERE'S NO REAL STRUCTURE TO IT.



Monster Truck Madness • Edge of Reality • Rockstar

As Reviewed By Ed Fear

AS MONSTER TRUCK RACING GOES, MTM IS A SOLID RENTAL. NOTHING STRIKING OR GROUNDBREAKING OVERALL BUT IT'S A FUN RACER WITH STRONG MULTIPLAYER ELEMENTS.



- THE SUMMIT RUMBLE MULTIPLAYER GAME IS GREAT
- THE GRAPHICS AREN'T ANYTHING TO WRITE HOME ABOUT

Pooch:

C+

IF YOU'RE INTO MONSTER TRUCK RACING, YOU'LL PROBABLY WANT TO PICK UP A COPY OF THIS GAME. ALTHOUGH THERE'S NOTHING REALLY EXCITING ABOUT THE GAME'S GRAPHICS, THE COURSES ARE FUN AND THE TRUCKS CONTROL LIKE I IMAGINE MONSTER TRUCKS WOULD HANDLE. THE COLLISION DETECTION IS GOOD AND THE TRUCKS UTILIZE THE N64'S PHYSICS CAPABILITIES NICELY. THE TWO AREAS WHERE I THINK THIS GAME REALLY EXCELS ARE IN THE COMPLETELY ADJUSTABLE CAMERA—ENABLING A TOP-DOWN STYLE GAME, HELPING TO REVEAL SHORTCUTS—AND THE MULTIPLAYER GAME SUMMIT RUMBLE. THIS VERSION OF KING OF THE HILL IS THOROUGHLY ENJOYABLE AND IS WORTH THE PRICE OF THE GAME ALONE—FOR THOSE INTO MONSTER TRUCKS.



- PRETTY GOOD AS MONSTER TRUCK GAMES GO, BUT ANYONE WHO'LL BUY IT IS AT THE TRACTOR PULLS DRINKING A BUD
- THAT WAS A JOKE. I'M SURE THEY HAVE N64'S IN THEIR TRAILERS

Dave Halverson:

C

MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS, FOR BEING DEVELOPED IN JUST SIX MONTHS, IS QUITE A FEAT. IT'S GOT GOOD, ALBEIT LOOSE AND BOUNCY, PHYSICS, SOLID BALANCE, A VARIETY OF LONG, INTERESTING TRACKS, AND A BUTTLOAD OF MONSTER TRUCKS. GOOD MUSIC AND SOUND EFFECTS, TOO. ON THE MINUS SIDE, THE CONTROL IS A LITTLE TOO LOOSE FOR MY LIKING, AND UNFORTUNATELY THE GAME'S NOT RAM PAK COMPATIBLE. I THOUGHT SOME OF THE POWER-UPS WERE JUST A LITTLE TOO OUT THERE AS WELL. HOVERING MONSTER TRUCKS? UH, OKAY. THE BATTLE GAMES ARE NICE EXTRAS, THOUGH, AND THERE'S LOTS OF CODES TO DIG UP.



Sonic Adventure • Sega • Sega

Originally Reviewed By Brady Fiechter (page 70)

SONIC IS GRAND GAME MAKING. AND WITH THE INTERNET OPTION, YOU CAN TRADE CHAO, DOWNLOAD SPECIAL FEATURES, AND UPLOAD SCORES AND RANKINGS. A HUGE SATISFYING LAUNCH TITLE.



- EYE CANDY SO SWEET YOU COULD GET A CAVITY JUST LOOKING AT IT!
- POSSIBLY—NO, IT IS—THE WORST DUB I HAVE EVER HEARD

Dave Halverson:

A-

THE FIRST TIME I PLAYED SA BACK WHEN THE DC DEBUTED IN JAPAN, I LOCKED MYSELF AWAY FOR TWO DAYS OVER THE CHRISTMAS BREAK AND WAS COMPLETELY AWESTRUCK. ALTHOUGH THE GAME WAS TOO EASY AND PRETTY BUGGY, IT BROKE SO MUCH NEW GROUND AND WAS SO BEAUTIFUL I DIDN'T CARE. IT'S JUST SO GOOD TO HAVE SONIC BACK. THE U.S. VERSION WAS SUPPOSED TO BE MARKEDLY IMPROVED, BUT I JUST DON'T SEE IT: THE SONIC GAME IS DEFINITELY BUTTONED UP SOME, BUT OTHERWISE (BESIDES THE HORRIFIC DUB THAT IS SO BAD I HAVE NO WORDS TO DESCRIBE IT) THE GAME REMAINS THE SAME. IT'S SIMPLY ENCHANTING. THE AMY & E-109 GAMES ARE MY FAVES AFTER SONIC AND THE PAYOFF FOR 100 PERCENT—SUPER SONIC—IS A MEMORY I WILL TREASURE FOR YEARS TO COME.



- YUJI NAKA'S SUPER-AMBITIOUS DREAMCAST DEBUT IS AN ABSOLUTE MUST-OWN
- THE AMERICAN VERSION, THOUGH SLIGHTLY BETTER, IS STILL DOGGED BY GLITCHINESS

Mike Hobbs:

A-

WITH ALL OF ITS TECHNICAL PROBLEMS, SONIC ADVENTURE STILL REMAINS ONE OF THE GREAT GAMING EXPERIENCES OF ALL TIME. THOUGH NOT BETTER AS A GAME, IN MY OPINION, THAN THE MAGICAL MARIO 64, IT'S SO MUCH MORE AMBITIOUS AND VARIED IN ITS GAMEPLAY THAT THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE IS EQUALLY BREATHTAKING. WITH SIX COMPLETELY UNIQUE ADVENTURES AND MORE STUNNING MOMENTS OF GRAPHICAL SPLENDOR THAN I CARE TO RECOUNT, SONIC ADVENTURE WILL LEAVE YOU IN AWE. IF IT WEREN'T FOR THE RATHER UP-FRONT GLITCHINESS, AN ALMOST FORGIVABLE BY-PRODUCT OF THE GAME'S AMBITION, I WOULDN'T HAVE PUT THAT ANNOYING LITTLE MINUS AFTER MY SCORE.



R.C. Championship Motocross • Funcom • THQ



As Reviewed By Grady Fiechter

THE RIDERS IN RICKY C. MX LOOK JUST A TAD TOO RELAXED TO BE COMPETING IN THE WORLD'S MOST PHYSICALLY DEMANDING MOTOR SPORT, AND THE FEEL OF THE GAME IS A BIT GRAVELLY. NOT A BAD ENGINE OVERALL.



- ONCE AGAIN THE RIDERS ANIMATE NOTHING LIKE THE REAL THING WHEN AIRBORNE
- OTHERWISE A SOLID, HIGHLY PLAYABLE RACER WITH GOOD DEPTH

Dave Halverson:

C+

THE GAME WE KNEW AS DIRT IS NOW FULLY LICENSED AND READY FOR ITS BIG U.S. DEBUT. I FEEL IT MAY HAVE LOST SOME OF ITS ORIGINAL LUSTER IN THE TRANSITION, BUT RC IS STILL A GOOD ALL-AROUND MX RACER. ALTHOUGH PLAGUED WITH BAD BODY ENGLISH, THE BIKES HANDLE GREAT OTHERWISE, REACTING REALISTICALLY TO THE TERRAIN, AND IT CERTAINLY POSES A GREAT CHALLENGE, AS YOU REALLY NEED TO DIAL IN THE BIKES AND COURSES TO PLACE IN THE TOP THREE. I FOUND THE MUSIC WAY OUT OF PLACE, HOWEVER, AND ONCE AGAIN THE DESIGNERS FAILED TO LOOK AT THE LIVE FOOTAGE THAT IS IN THEIR OWN INTRO AND APPLY THAT BODY ENGLISH TO THE ACTION. WILL ANYONE EVER GET IT COMPLETELY RIGHT? AT LEAST RC COMES CLOSE.



- A GOOD ENGINE AND ENTERTAINING MOTOCROSS ACTION SHOULD FIND PLENTY OF FANS
- THE REALISM OF THIS GAME IS IN QUESTION, BUT SHOULD BE GOOD ENOUGH FOR MOST

Mike Hobbs:

C+

SINCE I DON'T FOLLOW MOTOCROSS, I CAN'T IN GOOD CONSCIENCE CRITIQUE THIS GAME AS A RE-CREATION OF THE SPORT. BUT LOOKING AT IT MERELY AS A NICHE RACER, I THOUGHT RICKY CARMICHAEL TO BE PRETTY DECENT. IT'S GOT A SOLID ENGINE AND, TO ME, APPROPRIATE-LOOKING RIDER ANIMATION AND BIKE ARTICULATION, WITH A REALISTIC-FEELING PHYSICS MODEL AND TRACK SURFACES. THERE ARE PLENTY OF COURSES TO GO AROUND, TOO, WITH MANY OPPORTUNITIES TO PERFORM HIGHLY UNREALISTIC JUMPS AND LANDINGS. AT THE VERY LEAST, THIS GAME IS LIGHT-YEARS AHEAD OF JERRY McGRATH, FOR WHAT THAT'S WORTH.



Pac Man World • Namco • Namco



As Reviewed By Edd Fear

SO IT HAS SOME MINOR (BUT CONSISTENT) COLLISION PROBLEMS AND CONTROL ISSUES - NOTHING THAT STOPS ME FROM COMPLETING THE GAME. THE VARIETY OF LEVELS AND QUEST TO HELP MY FRIENDS GOT ME THROUGH THE GAME... TWICE!



- CLEVER BOSS ENCOUNTERS AND HEFTY PLATFORMING MECHANICS
- DISORIENTING 3D PERSPECTIVE; SURPRISINGLY UNPOLISHED FOR A NAMCO PRODUCT

Grady Fiechter:

C+

INCLUDED AS PART OF THIS WELL-INTENTIONED 3D PLATFORMER IS THE ORIGINAL ARCADE PAC MAN, WHICH, TO THIS DAY, HOLDS UP EXTREMELY WELL WITH ITS INGENUOUSLY SIMPLE GAMEPLAY; IT'S ALMOST MORE FUN TO PLAY THAN THE CLUMSY PAC MAN WORLD. A NUMBER OF WORTHY IDEAS RUN THROUGH PAC MAN WORLD—ESPECIALLY IN THE BOSS ENCOUNTERS, THE GAME'S STRONGEST SUIT—BUT THE LIMP PRODUCTION VALUES AND AWKWARD 3D PERSPECTIVE SINK THE GAME. AND QUITE HONESTLY, THE INNOCUOUS, PERENNIAL SMILING PAC MAN LACKS THE GOODS TO CARRY A NEXT-GENERATION TITLE. AFTER WHAT SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN CLOSE TO THREE YEARS IN DEVELOPMENT, I EXPECTED MORE FROM THE GAME—AND NAMCO ESPECIALLY.



- SOME ENTERTAINING PLATFORM ACTION FROM THE MAKERS OF KLONOA...
- ...THAT FEELS CURIOUSLY RUSHED AND ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES FOR A NAMCO GAME

Mike Hobbs:

C+

IT'S NOT LIKE NAMCO TO RELEASE A PRODUCT THAT FEELS UNDERCOOKED, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT THEY'VE DONE WITH PAC MAN WORLD. ESPECIALLY AFTER THE BRILLIANCE OF KLONOA, PMW'S SLOPPY COLLISION AND LESS-THAN-STUNNING GRAPHICAL ENGINE SEEM A LITTLE WORSE THAN THEY ACTUALLY ARE. THERE'S PLENTY OF ENTERTAINING PLATFORM GAMEPLAY HERE, HOWEVER, WITH NUMEROUS, CLASSIC PAC MAN CUES AND EVEN A FULL VERSION OF THE ORIGINAL GAME. IT'S JUST THAT THE OVERALL IMPRESSION OF THIS GAME IS THAT IT WAS RUSHED—SURPRISING CONSIDERING THE EXTENDED DEVELOPMENT SCHEDULE OF PMW, AS WELL AS NAMCO'S USUALLY UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO QUALITY AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL. A FAIRLY SOLID, IF LACKLUSTER EFFORT.



Pen Pen Tricelcon • General Entertainment • Infogrames



As Reviewed By: Mike Hobbs

I'M JUST HAPPY SOMEBODY STEPPED UP TO THE ICE AND BROUGHT PEN PEN OVER. THIS GAME IS BIG ON LAUGHS AND ONE-OR TWO-PLAYER FUN. THE THRILL'S OVER WITHIN DAYS, BUT IT'S A KICKER WHILE IT LASTS!



- LOVE THE CHARACTER DESIGN; CLEAN, PLEASANT GRAPHICS
- LITTLE SLOW, TOO FEW TRACKS, NOT ENOUGH REPLAY VALUE

Grady Fiechter:

C+

IN ITS OWN CHARMING, JUBILANT WAY, PEN PEN TRICELCON MANAGES TO ENTERTAIN MUCH MORE THAN IT SHOULD. THIS IS A GAME THAT, A YEAR FROM NOW, WE'LL LOOK BACK ON AND CHUCKLE AT, REALIZING THAT WE WERE TOO EASILY DAZZLED BY THE NEW EXPERIENCES AFFORDED BY DREAMCAST. FOR THE MOMENT, PEN PEN CAN BE GOOD, SIMPLE FUN, BUOYED BY ITS GOOBY, MUTATED PENGUINS RACING—OFTEN CLUMSILY—in their unique, waddling style. I LIKE THE IDEA OF PROPELLING THE CHARACTERS WITH RHYTHMIC BUTTON TAPS, BUT THESE BIZARRE CREATURES NEED A LITTLE MORE SPEED TO INTENSIFY THE RACING. DEFINITELY NOT YOUR TYPICAL RACING GAME.



- INFOGRAMES DID THE RIGHT THINGS AND LET THE WACKINESS FLY!
- THE KING OF ALTERNATIVE RACERS, PEN PEN IS A PSYCHEDELIC FEAST FOR THE EYES AND EARS

Dave Halverson:

B

I WAS SO HAPPY WHEN I HEARD THAT FAMILIAR VOICE WARBLE "WELCOME TO THE PEN PEN TRICELCON!" INFOGRAMES IS RELEASING THE GAME WITH ALL OF ITS WACKINESS INTACT, AND THANKFULLY SO, AS IT WOULDN'T WORK ANY OTHER WAY. THE TEAM AT GENERAL ENTERTAINMENT HAVE EVEN DRESSED THE TRICELCON UP SOME SINCE ITS JAPANESE DEBUT, WITH AN-ALL NEW 3D INTRO AND COMICAL NEW LOADING SCREENS. THIS GAME IS A BEAUTIFUL SIGHT NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I PLAY IT, AND REALLY TAKES ALTERNATIVE RACING TO THE NEXT LEVEL (USE JAWS). LONG, INSPIRED COURSE DESIGNS, COMPLETELY FREAKED-OUT CHARACTERS (YOU CAN EVEN DRESS 'EM UP!) AND CRAZY TUNES MAKE THIS A MUST-OWN DC TITLE.



COUNTER + POINT



Ready 2 Rumble • Midway • Midway



Originally Reviewed By Brady Fiechter (page 68)

READY 2 RUMBLE WILL SUCCEED MORE AS A TWO-PLAYER EXPERIENCE, BUT TAKING TO THE RING SOLO IS NOT WITHOUT ITS MOMENTS. THE INCLUSION OF CHAMPIONSHIP MODE IS ALMOST ENOUGH TO RECOMMEND THIS NEAR-MISS BOXING GAME.



- 60-FPS ANIMATION, SOME OF THE BEST-LOOKING CHARACTERS EVER ON A CONSOLE AND BOUNCY BOOBS MEET UP IN THE SAME GAME! HOTCHA!

Dave Halverson:

B

I CAN UNDERSTAND HOW R2R MAY RECEIVE LESS-THAN-STARLING SCORES FROM SOMEONE EXPECTING A BOXING SIMULATION, BUT FOR A PURE KNOCK-DOWN DRAG-OUT ARCADE BRAWLER, THE GAME CERTAINLY DELIVERS THE GOODS, AND THEN SOME. NOT RELYING SOLELY ON ITS GOOD LOOKS, R2R LETS YOU TRAIN AND BRING ANY OF THE COMBATANTS UP THROUGH THE RANKS, AND SPORTS FIERCE BOSSES AND AN UNEXPECTED DIVERSITY OF LOCALES. ADD REAL-TIME SWELLING AND TOOTH LOSS, A PLETHORA OF CAMERAS TO PLAY WITH, AN IMPRESSIVE ASSORTMENT OF BRAWLERS, AND HOT MAMAS WITH GELATIN HOOTERS AND, WELL, I LIKE IT A LOT!



- THIS GAME GIVES OFF A VERY GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION – FUN AND ADDICTIVE
- EXTENDED PLAY REVEALS A CRIPPLING LACK OF DEPTH AND LESS-THAN-PERFECT ENGINE

Mike Hobbs:

C

LIKE AN INSECURE BOY AT A NEW SCHOOL, READY 2 RUMBLE TRIES VERY HARD TO PLEASE AND JUST ENDS UP BREAKING OUT IN A FLOP SWEAT UNDER CLOSE SCRUTINY. THE CHARACTERS LOOK GOOD HERE AT FIRST GLANCE, WITH DETAILED FACES AND THE GREAT GIMMICK OF REAL-TIME SWELLING AND BRUISING ABOUT THE NOGGIN. LOOK AGAIN, HOWEVER, AND YOU FIND EMBARRASSING AND IMPOSSIBLE JOINT ARTICULATION AND A FRAME RATE THAT IS NOT LOCKED AT 60. THE GAMEPLAY IS FUN AT FIRST TRY TOO, BUT PLAY AGAIN AND YOU SOON DISCOVER THAT THERE IS SIMPLY NOTHING TO DISCOVER HERE. IT LACKS DEPTH, BUT EVEN WORSE, IT LACKS ANY REAL SENSE OF SATISFACTION FROM LANDING HITS; EVERYTHING FEELS SOFT AND AWKWARD HERE. THIS GAME ENTERTAINS FOR A TIME, BUT DOESN'T HOLD ANY LONG-TERM VALUE.



Soul Calibur • Namco • Namco



Originally Reviewed By Brady Fiechter (page 72)

I'VE PLAYED SOUL CALIBUR FOR A MONTH NOW, AND MY APPRECIATION FOR THE GAME ONLY CONTINUES TO DEEPEN.



- THE MOST AMAZING VISUALS I'VE EVER SEEN ALONG WITH PHENOMENAL CHARACTER DESIGNS – SENSORY OVERLOAD!
- AMAZING CONTROLS. THE CHARACTERS ALWAYS DO THE MOVE INTENDED. GREAT DEPTH, TOO

Dave Halverson:

A

AS ONE WHO CONSIDERS WASTING AWAY DAYS AND WEEKS STUDYING THE SUBTLE NUANCES OF A FIGHTING GAME SOMEWHAT A WASTE OF TIME, SOUL CALIBUR IS MY EXCEPTION TO THE RULE FOR MANY REASONS. OF COURSE, THE VISUALS ARE SIMPLY THE BEST THERE IS, PERIOD. THAT HELPS. BUT AS SOMEONE WHO GRAVITATES TOWARDS STIMULATING FEMALE CHARACTERS, I FELL INSTANTLY AND DEEPLY IN LOVE WITH SC. BETWEEN IVY AND TAKI I'M ELATED WITH THE CHARACTER DESIGNS. THE DEPTH OF SOUL CALIBUR IS STRIKING AS WELL. THE CONTROLS ARE BUTTERY, AND EASY TO PICK UP VERSUS THE CPU AI, BUT PLAYING AGAINST FLESHYS, SC'S VAST DEPTH CONTINUES TO SURFACE. THE BEST FIGHTING GAME I HAVE EVER PLAYED.



- THE BEST AT-HOME FIGHTER THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN. SIMPLY STUNNING
- THE BEST ARCADE CONVERSION OF ALL TIME AS NO OTHER HAS PRESENTED SUCH A GRAPHICAL LEAP

Mike Hobbs:

A+

NEVER BEFORE HAS THERE BEEN SO COMPLETE A FIGHTING GAME AS NAMCO'S BREATHTAKING DREAMCAST VERSION OF SOUL CALIBUR. EVERY HUMAN SENSE THAT A VIDEO GAME CAN STIMULATE IS PUT INTO A STATE OF ENCEPHALIC SHOCK. GRAPHICALLY, SOUL CALIBUR IS SIMPLY IN ANOTHER LEAGUE WITH THE MOST WELL MODELED AND ENVELOPED CHARACTERS EVER SEEN. THE BACKGROUNDS ARE BEAUTIFUL AND RICH IN COLOR AND ATMOSPHERE, AND LACK ONLY THE INTIMACY OF VF3'S STAGES. THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT, HOWEVER, IS IN THE GAMEPLAY—AN EXHILARATING MIX OF ACCESSIBILITY AND DEEP STRATEGY, CULMINATING IN THE MOST SATISFYING ALL-AROUND FIGHTER I'VE EVER PLAYED. IF YOU DON'T BUY SOUL CALIBUR, JUST STOP PLAYING GAMES.



TNN Hardcore Heat • CRI • ASC Games



Reviewed By Dave Halverson

ASC WAS WISE TO BRING CRI'S BUGGY HEAT STATESIDE. ONE OF SEGA'S OLDEST AND MOST EXPERIENCED FIRST PARTIES, THEY HAVE CREATED AN OFF-ROAD RACER WITH FEW EQUALS. THIS IS BEYOND ARCADE QUALITY AT HOME, RIGHT NOW!



- CONTROL OF CARS EXHIBIT EXCELLENT SENSE OF PHYSICS
- GOOD-LOOKING COURSES WITH NICE ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

Grady Fiechter:

B

WITH SEGA RALLY DROPPING OFF THE DAUNTING 20-GAMES-PLUS LAUNCH LIST OF THE DREAMCAST, TNN MOTORSPORT HARDCORE HEAT WILL DO A FORMIDABLE JOB OF PLAYING SUBSTITUTE. IN SOME WAYS I ACTUALLY ENJOY THIS REALISTIC OFF-ROAD RACER MORE THAN SEGA'S STALWART; IT LOOKS GOOD, PLAYS EXTREMELY WELL, AND HAS AN EXCELLENT PHYSICS ENGINE. DRIVING THROUGH RAIN AND CRASHING LIGHTNING CREATES AN INVOLVING ATMOSPHERE, AND THE CARS DO AN EXCELLENT JOB OF CREATING A SENSE OF CONVINCING PHYSICS OVER THE VARYING TERRAIN: GETTING BOGGED DOWN IN SAND OR SPINNING OUT IN THE SNOW IS A PLEASING TOUCH. I LOOK FORWARD TO A SEQUEL WITH A FEW MORE TRACKS AND BETTER MUSIC.



- GREAT GRAPHICS AND CHALLENGING GAMEPLAY MARK THIS RE-BADGED BUGGY HEAT
- A LITTLE TOO TOUCHY, PERHAPS, FOR THE LESS-DEDICATED GAMER

Mike Hobbs:

B

IS IT JUST ME, OR IS THE NASHVILLE NETWORK LICENSE A LITTLE, HOW SHALL I SAY, UNAPPEALING? THANKFULLY, ONLY THE TITLE SCREEN AND A FEW ASSORTED BILLBOARD GRAPHICS HAVE CHANGED, SO FROM A GAMEPLAY STANDPOINT, TNN IS TRUE TO CRI'S BUGGY HEAT, AND IT'S A GREAT GAME OF OFF-ROAD RACING. THERE'S PLENTY OF CHALLENGE IN MASTERING THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF TERRAIN, AS WELL AS SOME GOOD-LOOKING GRAPHICS WITH INCREDIBLE DRAW DISTANCE AND COOL LITTLE REAL-TIME DRIVERS IN EACH VEHICLE. THE PHYSICS ARE ROBUST, AND LEARNING TO DRIVE CLEANLY AROUND THE TRACK AT HIGHER DIFFICULTY LEVELS PROVES TOUGH. WITH SEGA RALLY 2 MISSING IN ACTION, THIS IS A GREAT ALTERNATIVE.

Tom Clancy's
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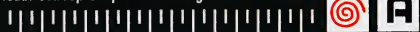
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gamers' republic sports '99

NFL 2000

developer: visual concepts • publisher: sega available: now



This game is freakin' incredible! Those words loop inside my head and oftentimes come screaming out of my mouth, along with other more colorful phrases, every time I play this game; heck, even when I am not. The game experience has stuck with me like no other sports title ever. In fact, I enjoy NFL 2K so much that I have played through three seasons without the use of a VMU. Try it yourself and you will come to appreciate my level of dedication and admiration for the game.

My first time out I was a bit surprised by the AI. Although tight, I managed to spank it pretty good. It allowed me to witness some of the routines and tendencies strung about. For one, the computer does not like the notion that it is going to lose. It will use all sorts of tactics to try and cushion the inevitable. I am not talking about intelligent use of time outs to stop the clock, either. The defensive line becomes frustrated and is a lot more aggressive in tackling the ball carrier by picking him up and slamming him to the green.

By putting pressure on the quarterback, he will have a pattern of letting the ball go with a slight wobble, making diving or one-handed catches unlikely. When the game clock is running out, the computer will try and conserve its T.O.s and run plays to the outside, running out of bounds to stop the clock. If you force a fourth down, the computer will not run the risk of losing the ball at the current scrimmage line, so it will punt. This is not surprising.

What creeped me out, though, was that it would run the play clock down to its final seconds before punting the ball. Now I have

seen this loosely in other games – the computer taking just a bit longer to choose its play, or sitting at the line up a few seconds-but nothing like this. It will wait until the last moment before submitting the ball over to me, giving me as little time

possible to score again.

When I bumped up the AI to Pro, things became rather tough. I suddenly switched from being the pimp to becoming the bitch. In more cases than not, what used to work now became the example of exactly what not to do. My wide receivers became victim to a lot of double coverage down field, and I needed to really exploit the abilities of my running backs, using many stiff-arms, spins and hurdles to get any sort of positive yardage. Don't think that this took away from my fun; it was just the opposite.

I would replay many of my plays, most of which were just enough to get the first-down conversion. On third-and-four, watching Emmitt Smith break two separate tackles, hurdle a third, then drag a fourth one hanging from his ankles across the line of completion, is indescribable. Not to mention when Eric "Moose" Bjornson barreled through the defensive line, only to carry one of them across the goal line for the touchdown. The sensation it delivers is so genuine and unrivaled that I find it hard to believe others will be able to capture the same feeling.

Much of this is due to the deep AI patterns, though equal thanks must go to the remarkable player animations and tackle situations. The line of scrimmage doesn't look like a mess of interlocked player models and holes are quick to find and abuse. Defensive backs jump off




both feet and off one, stretching out to create an interception. Linemen are thrown back off-balance, creating pressure on the QB. Half-backs shake the defense and put down a hand when hit to keep the play live and go for the extra yard. Players on the scoring team celebrate while the defense lower their heads. Soaking in all of the atmosphere and ambient motions going on will take months of devotion—a task that will uncover an even deeper attraction to what Visual Concepts has accomplished.

The game is so far beyond anything out that I started to complain about issues like fans not getting up during halftime to grab a hot dog or hit up the bathroom, when in reality, there are not really any problems. I found two small hitches, though—not detrimental ones, but they are recognizable.

The first one has to do with watching a simulated game. The guy running the ball back after a kickoff will run straight into traffic, making no effort to weave around it. No big deal. The second hobble is when you

are kicking off, there is a spot you can hit that works better than an on-side kick. When the ball takes the lopsided bounce and jumps back towards the kicking team, the front line of the receiving team will just stand still as the ball sits inches away.

Granted, this is not normal practice and many will never witness the flaw; it is there to prove it is only a video game. Before I found this loophole I was beginning to wonder just what I was up against. I guess the Sega adverts have had an effect on me. 




TOM'S NFL ARCH-NEMESIS FERNANDO MOSQUERA WEIGHS IN:

All the credit in the world must go out to Visual Concepts for their NFL 2K effort. As my colleague has so distinctly described, the game's graphics and presentation are dead on. The feeling of experiencing the NFL excitement has never been done better in video football; of course, experience includes gameplay in addition to presentation.

The manner in which VC has dialed in NFL2K's gameplay is the true triumph of this debut Dreamcast title. The re-creation of the complex passing system used in the NFL is downright unbelievable. Three-step drops, five-step drops, shotgun formation—it all affects your strategy of how to get the ball safely to your receivers. Passing control is enhanced by the "Maximum Passing" system that

allows you to aim the path of the ball beyond to just a specific receiver; precision is such that you can decide whether you wish to lead your man, make him come back for it, or cut to either side.

So, what are my issues with the game? Lack of career mode, no chain-gang, fatigue not a factor unless full-length quarters are played, weather effects not as intense as they could be, and no pay bonuses for winning the Super Bowl—the game can get so real, you feel you should be getting paid. If Visual Concepts does some tweaking between now and next year, I'm sure NFL 2001 will be a contender for that all-elusive A+ rating. 





When GameDay first stepped onto the field its rookie year, it did so under the intimidation of a seasoned and well-respected veteran to the game. And while most gamers followed their 16-bit favorite into the 32-bit market, Sony managed to draft a loyal and growing audience through the years.

A lot has been lost since the sprite-based players of year one, most notably control, but that seems to have finally been fixed. Player models are smaller and the camera is pulled back a bit, allowing the game to move without a hitch. There are certain issues, though—including botchy collision detect, crowded play calling and unintelligent AI—which take away from enjoying a complete season. But when playing a two-player game, these shortcomings tend to become more tolerable.

Every year I hope for realistic gameplay; instead, visuals take shotgun while AI takes to the bench. One question: when working with limited hardware capabilities, why use motion-capture routines for elaborate dance celebrations when you obviously need to address more detrimental AI schemes? **Y**

gamers' republic sports '99

NFL GAMEDAY 2000

developer: redzone interactive publisher: 989 available: now



This series has a progressive history with the Nintendo 64. On its third time out on the system, the series retains and excels in control and response, plus it manages to supply grand visuals. In fact, a whole new set of player models and nearly twice the animations were created to keep the action moving as naturally as possible.

So, cosmetically and mechanically Madden NFL 2000 is great. It helps make playing a multiplayer game stimulating. However, when stiff-arming through a season things are a bit different.

The AI running for the opposing team is okay and seems to become more schooled in recognizing patterns. It is the accompanied computer AI that the player will share a team with that is flat out dumb.

In more than a dozen instances, when I was on defense, if I did not swap players to control the man closest to the ball, my man would let the guy go for another five or so yards before trying to tackle him. What's that all about? **Y**

gamers' republic sports '99

MADDEN NFL 2000

developer/publisher: electronic arts available: now



It never occurred to me before this game hit my desk, but the N64 controller, when holding it as if to use the analog stick, feels as if you are holding a fishing reel. It didn't make wanting to play this game any more intriguing, just more genuine. Of course, the twelve pack of beer by my side could have had something to do with it as well. Hey, I needed to set the mood.

I admittedly don't know much about fishing. All of my experiences come from days as a young'n. The only lure I used was an annelid and the only indicator as to if I had a bite was a bobbing floater. Boy, a lot has changed since those days, and with all of the newfangled gadgets fishermen can use nowadays, it would seem more troublesome to get one from the grocery store.

When starting a game, you will be able to choose from all sorts of variables that will have direct effect to whether or not you will be successful in catching that evening's dinner. There is a huge selection of lures to pick from. Evidently each one represents what the fish will be in the mood for, depending on the time of day and weather conditions. Use the wrong lure and the game becomes frustrating, so do yourself a

favor and take some time to read the in-game information. It helps...a lot.

Once you have come to grips with the pre-fishing requisites and are on the boat, you can use a sonar device that shows underwater activity while moving about the lakefront. Like me, you will probably give up on trying to decipher the readings displayed and opt for getting the bait in the water as quickly as possible. To do so, pivot in the direction you want to fish and castoff. From this point the screen splits, showing your character reeling in on the top half of the screen and the reaction of the lure underwater on the bottom half.

Wait for a nibble and snap the rod - well, you know, the analog stick. The fish can put up a noble fight and sometimes they will get away. Learning the art of give and take will be necessary to hooking the big one and the trophy, a task few will accomplish. A two-player mode is unfortunately absent, but I have a strange hunch that this game is going to do very well anyway. I feel diffident in letting others know, but I really like the game. Everything represented is executed appropriately, especially the Rumble Pak feature. **Y**

gamers' republic sports '99

IN-FISHERMAN BASS HUNTER

developer: gearhead entertainment publisher: rockstar available: now



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NFL 2K



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world republic

[i] It's been a good month on the import front, although August did have its share of disappointments. Toshinden Subaru could have been better (a lot better) and Wolfteam's latest, Cybernetic Empire is Mr. Hanky's roommate. Read on for the good stuff...

World Republic Preview • developer/publisher enix • available in japan now

pop'n tanks



Enix delivers a vs. tank game with personality and playability to burn

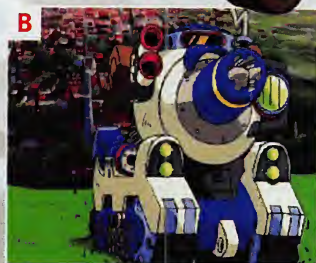
After playing imports for awhile (well, like ten years), the ones that warrant an American release are easy to spot, and Enix' Pop'n Tanks definitely falls under that category. Somehow, though, with its quirky super-deformed tank warfare theme I kind of doubt that it will. Regardless, if you're in the market for some versus play minus the human element, you can't do much better than this. Whether played alone in the story mode, or vs. play against man or machine, Pop'n Tanks is everything you could possibly want in a one-on-one action/shooting game.

Instantly recognizable as one of the game's best resources is its intuitive camera. Tracking the action fluidly, changing pace in perfect harmony with your every move, it couldn't be more refined. The environmental effects help drive the action too, as ducking behind obstacles causes them to go temporarily transparent. But the many tanks themselves are the game's main attraction. Loaded with as much bubbly anime-style personality as their pilots (I guess that's why they're poppin'), each bounces into action with all of the vigor that a certain Tiny Tank could never muster. As they blast across the game's vast assortment of polygonal battlefields, the quality physics jump to life, as the tanks bend and sway with all the rubbery mannerisms of a Motor Toon racer. Heavy artillery blasts send them reeling back and they react realistically to enemy fire. Depending on the proximity of the enemy, an impressive arsenal of short- and long-range artillery is at your disposal, but much of the game's course also depends on the tank you choose. Ranging from the slow and most powerful to the fastest and weakest with 10 in between, the proceedings seldom become repetitive. The game's user-friendly control mechanism makes turret control a snap, and the tanks maneuver with ease via standard digital controls. Within minutes of your first campaign, I guarantee you'll be hooked on Pop'n Tanks. Surrounding all of this good fun, Enix have gone as far as outfitting the game with highly polished anime cinemas as well, suggesting the possibility of a series or perhaps an animated feature in the years to come. Perhaps these tanks will pop again on PS2. Time will tell. ⚡



A. This guy is about ready to unleash a big-bada-boom on his opponent. They take a sec., but go boom real good. **B.** Pop'n Tank's anime intro. is long and easy on the eyes. **C.** Special attacks have a good chance of scoring as you can see. They definitely cover some ground. **D.**

Excellent cameras really pull it all together. Even side by side you feel in complete control.



World Republic says "This game is simply a gas to play alone or with a victim. The character designs rule and the gameplay is fast and intuitive." **B**

pop'n tanks © enix 1999.



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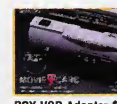
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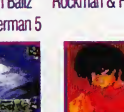
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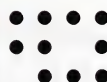
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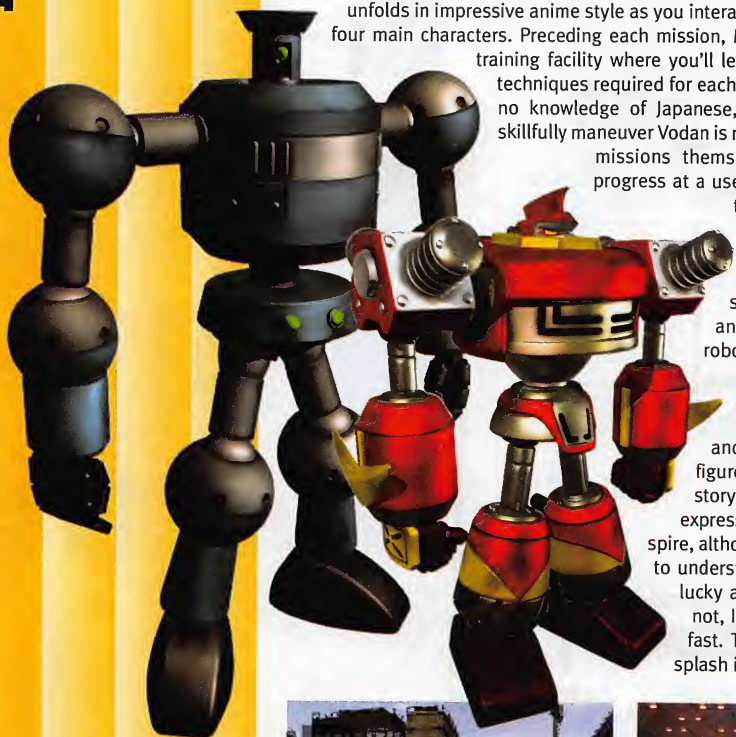
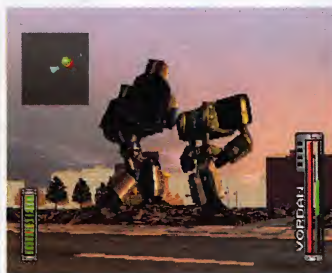
robot dandy



It's huge, weighs many tons, and you get to control it... take Vodan for a test drive and you'll never come back!

If you're a fan of *Gigantor*, *Giant Robo*, or the recent *Iron Giant* (I'm guilty on all counts), or if you've ever dreamt of controlling your own gigantic robot, Human has surprisingly designed a game with you in mind. In my opinion their best PlayStation effort thus far, *Robot Dandy* is one of the best reasons to buy an import game this year. Even with the U.S. PlayStation library bursting at the seams, there is nothing like *Dandy* available on any platform, and probably never will be. Playing as Mamoru, you assume complete control (remote control via the PlayStation pad) of a skyscraper-high giant robot. Toggling between Mamoru and Vodan via the select button, as Mamoru you're able to run about freely amidst gigantic cityscapes, getting in the position of your choice to guide Vodan through each mission. The true-to-life dimensions of the environments help provide an uncanny sense of realism and the sensation of actually controlling a massive robot. Administered with sheer perfection, Hudson is to be commended for their effort. In fact, if you have a big-screen TV and you play this game standing up, it's almost as if you're actually in the environment. In between missions, the story unfolds in impressive anime style as you interact with the game's four main characters. Preceding each mission, Mamoru visits the training facility where you'll learn to master the techniques required for each, and so even with no knowledge of Japanese, learning how to skillfully maneuver Vodan is relatively easy. The

missions themselves start out simple, and progress at a user-friendly pace so that by the time you're confronted with a one-on-one battle you're ready for action. And there's nothing quite like standing 50 to 100 yards away and guiding a 150-foot-tall giant robot into battle. As far as the game's menus go, they're fairly straightforward and simple to figure out, and it's easy enough to vaguely figure out what's going on in the story through the character's vivid expression and the events that transpire, although, I must admit, I'd really like to understand every nuance. Maybe we'll get lucky and *Dandy* will show up stateside. If not, I highly recommend a purchase, and fast. This game will surely make a big splash in Japan. ⚡



A



B



C

(A) You can run around the city freely with your remote control and then turn and switch to Vodan at any time! (B) Back at HQ, if you wreck too much of the city on your mission, this chick gets all bent outta' shape. (C) Back at the training facility you'll learn the ins and outs of Vodan's many moves.

World Republic says "Definitely an import worth searching out. There haven't been many lately but *Robot Dandy* is not to be missed by sci-fi, *Giant Robo*, or *Gigantor* fans." B+



World Republic Review • developer/publisher from software • available in japan now

frame grille



From Software's first Dreamcast release is a good effort, but without Internet play, the experience is lacking

The official announcement of Virtual On 2 for Dreamcast kind of rains on From Software's Frame Grille. One can't help but fantasize about VOn while playing Frame Grille, a solid mech-combat effort curiously lacking in excitement and longevity. From's dry approach and the deliberate, slow gameplay ultimately make Frame Grille deficient in a way that VOn most certainly will not. Maybe it's not fair to compare the two, as one was made for arcade sensibilities (speed, speed, speed!), but their core concepts are so similar that to look at the games in a vacuum would be wrong.

As in From's Armored Core series, changing parts and upgrading your mech is a rather hefty part of the design, and it's the one thing that Frame Grille has over VOn. You have three "frames" (light, medium, and heavy) that can be built up into working machines by applying legs, arms, heads, etc. Here, From gets tricky by throwing in a unique way of building new parts: you earn crystals during battle, which can be combined in various ways to form parts for your mech. It's an interesting system that encourages experimentation, but to be honest, I found it a little cumbersome and wished for the simplicity of off-the-shelf parts. Two worthwhile ideas that spring from this concept are the squire creation and "stones." Squires are little autonomous helpers that can be unleashed during battle, targeting your rival independently. The stones, again made by crystal combination, can be applied to your mech, giving attacks different elemental properties such as fire and ice.

Where From Software's heritage hurts the game a bit is in its overall speed and urgency. The control here feels just like Armored Core, and while that would be fine if this was a free-roaming action game, it's too sluggish in a one-on-one environment. You're always wanting more speed, more maneuverability, and you just never get it. Sega got the pacing and control so right with Virtual On that anything less feels second rate.

One wishes that From would have simply bitten the bullet and delivered a full, Armored Core-style game with missions and some kind of story. Maybe next time. As it stands, they've delivered a highly polished and professional piece of work with great graphics that simply feels like a stick in the mud next to VOn. An internet play function would have elevated Frame Grille somewhat, but we'll have to wait for an American release to sample this potentially game-saving feature. >=

(A) Custom mech creation is a big part of the gameplay. This is From, after all. (B) Notice the nicely done real-time lighting effects in this shot. (C) Two-player mode in effect.



World Republic says: "With a little bit more ambition, Frame Grille could have held up as an action-packed one- and two-player game, but is just a bit dull and slow in the end. Well done, but staid." C+



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Dreamcast Preview

to the north
GAME BY HUDSON

It seems that the desire to interact with cute female characters in dungeons never ceases among gamers in Japan. Maybe this is the reason why a developer such as Hudson decided to release a sequel to TO THE NORTH: White Illumination, which was released for Dreamcast on March 18.

The sequel, TO THE NORTH: Photo Memories, enables players to continue their summer adventure in Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan, with the eight female characters who appeared in the previous version. This time, you have to take five good photos of each character in front of real traveling spots and save the pictures for later viewing. If you have not planned a for summer vacation, this game may give you the chance since it includes real footage of popular travel spots in Japan.



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher now/esp/xbec/kadokawa • available in japan now

nadesico

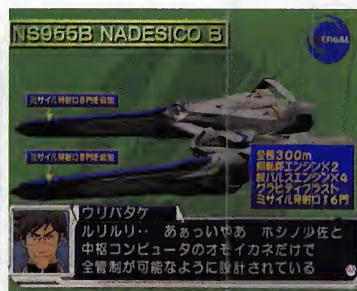


Go to war with Megumi, Minato, RURI-CHAN-!, and the rest of the crew.

It has been a year since the popular animated film *Nadesico: The Prince of Darkness* hit the box offices in Japan. Now, ESP, Xebec, and Kadokawa Shoten (one of the biggest publishers in Japan) are collaborating to release a simulation adventure game for Dreamcast on August 26, *Nadesico: The Mission*. Taking place after the events depicted in the film, the story of *Nadesico* is entirely new, and the character design from original artist Kenji Goto is being completely reworked as well.

Nadesico: The Mission is built around two distinctive gameplay elements. The first is adventure, in which you take on the role of the commander Nadesico B and direct the course of battles, and the other is a battle simulation, in which you will be engaging in turn-based polygon conflict.

Although the animation elements of the game are quite lovely, they will appeal more to *Nadesico* followers. There is a sense of accomplishment for completing each mission, but the redundancy of the easy, basic gameplay will likely only hold the attention of fans of the movie; players who demand deep physics and interaction will be left wanting more. The many FMV sequences inserted between missions are, however, quite satisfying, because Director Sato himself was directly responsible for creating them. But the emphasis on style and images just might not be enough to carry this limited title.



Dreamcast Preview

super producer

GAME BY HUDSON

Ever wanted to be a producer? Then check out Hudson's *Super Producers* this October, where your goal is to become a top producer and make a hit song.

First, you have to find candidates by holding an audition. This costs money, which means you have to watch your budget. Based on this audition and your instinct, you choose ten candidates that you believe have the best shot at a hit. Then, you get them the right music, make-up and promotion.

Also, using the DC's built-in modem, you can log onto a server and compete with other singers from all over the world. If you can make it to the #1 position here, then you just might have what it takes to become a real producer in the music industry.



World Republic Preview • developer/publisher nsc/masaya • available in japan october

langrisser millennium

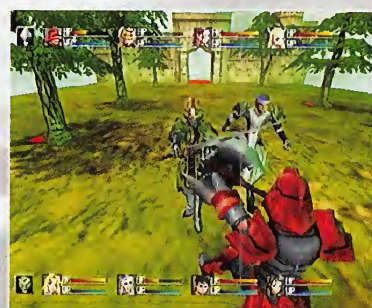


Masaya's classic strategy series enters the new millennium on a new console, in full 3D.

The *Langrisser* series, a longtime favorite since the Mega Drive days, is receiving yet another incarnation, this time on Dreamcast as a real-time, fully polygonal game. In previous *Langrisser* titles, the play system was based on typical simulation RPGs in which you had to clear each stage to advance to the next level; gameplay progressed according to simple battles waged between two factions. *Langrisser Millennium* will be a real-time simulation consisting of two parts: strategy map and battle. In the strategy map, you organize your troops and dispatch them to other countries. Here you'll also be able to train and outfit your troops. However, even as you tend to such idiosyncratic duties, the overall gameplay is still running in real time. In effect, you can employ a wait-and-see strategy and pull troops back from the main line while the other countries destroy each other.

You can organize up to four characters as your personal troop leaders. During a battle, which will be primarily action based, you can control one specific character at a time. However, you can freely change the active character so

that you can take on different responsibilities. Since you'll be taking into account various procedures such as negotiation and persuasion, as well as formations during battle, *Millennium* requires major playtime. This latest *Langrisser* will be available this October in Japan.



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super producers © hudson 1999. langrisser millennium © nsc/masaya 1999.



World Republic Review • developer quest • publisher nintendo • available in japan now

ogre battle 64



It doesn't flaunt any substantial 3D, but Quest's latest in its Ogre Battle saga does the N64 proud.

Quest's much-liked Ogre Battle series finds its way to the N64 in good form. Playing more like the SNES entry rather than the PS' Tactics Ogre, Ogre Battle 64 will no doubt delight fans of the series.

Curiously, OB 64 doesn't make much use of the N64's 3D capabilities. Only the field map is rendered in real time, the rest of the game being made up of attractive pre-rendered backgrounds and sprites. Thanks to the highly appealing character design and overall aesthetic, this does not work against the game, which has a very soft, cohesive look to it.

Those expecting a game like Final Fantasy Tactics may be disappointed, as much of the strategy now comes before the battle. Once parties engage each other from the field map, battle is handled essentially automatically, with you having control only over attacking style. You can't move members around during battle, nor can you control them individually. But once you accept this, the game comes into its own as you learn how to massage your troops and units into lethal battle parties and enjoy the neat and tidy visual style of the game. Later, you'll even gain the ability to group parties together and move them in formation.

As of press, Nintendo was uncertain as to the possibility of bringing Ogre Battle 64 to America, so the only way to enjoy this game may be as an import. If you've played any of the other Ogre Battles, you should have little trouble getting through the game's menu system and owe it to yourself to check out this fantastic entry in the series. >=



World Republic says "With its highly appealing character design and addictive micro-management, Quest's N64 Ogre Battle entry is every bit as fun, addictive, and challenging as the SNES original!" B+

World Republic Review • developer vivarium • publisher sega • available in japan now

seaman



One part virtual pet, two parts creepiest thing you've ever seen. Seaman is my friend.



Only the Japanese can make a game this bizarre. Vivarium's Seaman is like a lysergic take on the pet-growing genre. Instead of hatching fuzzy little monsters, here you raise human-headed fish straight out of Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life*. And creepiest of creepies, the things talk to you, and thanks to the bundled microphone device, you to talk back to them.

At the start of Seaman, you've got just a cold, airless aquarium along with a stock of food and one Seaman egg. Before you can begin, you've got to adjust the environment of the tank by switching on a heater and oxygenating the water. As both the temperature and air content slowly decrease over time, you've got to keep constant tabs on their levels. Once the environment is right, you can drop your sole Seaman egg into the tank. Given a few moments, the egg will divide into a bunch of vaguely sperm-like eyeballs that react as you tap on the glass with a virtual finger. Also residing in the tank is a dangerous nautilus, which will snatch up any little gestating Seamen who happen to drift into its path.

For about six hours, I couldn't get anything to happen with the eggs. I could coax the things into spinning around, and not much else. Then, the nautilus began unleashing clouds of ink before finally crawling from his shell and dying. At this point, the Seamen hatched and I had at least six of the little fellows. The human faces were there, but they had these sleight, translucent bodies and were speaking an odd sort of gibberish. Given a little more time (and food) they began growing and speaking proper Japanese, understanding my pidgin attempts at asking them their mood. After weaker members were weeded out by the other Seamen in a rather disturbing ritual, I ended up with one healthy one who is still evolving as I write this; to what end I have no idea. I also received a dry tank that has so far yielded moths and spiders with Seaman faces on them.

Since Seaman was at this year's E3 speaking English, a U.S. release seems likely, though I find it hard to believe that such an odd game could actually come out over here. Pray that it does, for this most unique and bizarre of video game experiments will surely find a twisted following. I know I was hugely addicted to this weird thing. >=

World Republic says "A stranger game you will not find this year. Seaman holds me in its grasp as of this writing, having participated in its evolution for about a week now. How does it end?"



Monty Python saw this coming way back in 1977 in "The Meaning of Life"...



World Republic Review • developer/publisher tyo • available in japan now

street scooters



They really can't drive 55! Dart around Japan with a crazed band of scooter freaks!

A scooter racing game that somehow managed to garner some pretty high scores from the Japanese press, Street Scooters is proof of one thing: the Japanese love them scooters! Actually, in terms of racing games, I believe their standards to be somewhat different than ours. Placing an emphasis more on funky



theme-based gameplay than graphic prowess and accurate physics and controls, SS leans more towards zany than hardcore. Aspects we think of as unforgiving, like getting completely hung up on the corner of a polygon, are commonplace here. You just have to learn to steer well around bad collision points. The engine, too, is quite archaic, making the likes of Wipeout and Gran Turismo look like they're on different hardware. Still, I cannot deny the game is somewhat addicting and fun in a freaky sort of way. Of course, I go for all of this Japanese weirdness, so I'm not the best barometer in any case. SS is dual analog and Negicon compatible, has a solid split-screen mode and a pretty advanced control scheme for a scooter racing game, with separate commands for powersliding, wheelies, jumps, and endos. I wouldn't go out of my way to grab a copy of Street Scooters, but if you love scooters, I suppose it's worth a look.



World Republic says "There's only one way to describe this game: Funky. Whip'n around some pretty chunky real estate with these fruitcakes is definitely an acquired taste." C

World Republic Review • developer/publisher capcom • available in japan now

tron ni kobun



Rockman's nemesis is back in her own adventure starring the cutest little blokes we have ever seen.

I fell in love with the little Lego-like Kobuns in Rockman Dash (Megaman Neo). Imagine my delight then when playing Capcom's latest, Tron ni Kobun, an all-new entry in the so-called Dash series. Co-starring along with Tron, Rockman's nemesis in the original Dash, the Kobuns are your little helpers in this delightful 3D action/adventure game. Featuring a mix of shooting action, puzzle elements, and RPG-like dungeon levels, Tron ni Kobun works tirelessly to keep you entertained. The simple-looking engine carries over from Dash, but the overall look is so consistent that you forgive its relative simplicity and use of low-res textures.

The game is fairly text heavy, but anyone who's played through the Japanese Rockman Dash or is comfortable with imports should have little trouble playing the game. For the rest, an American release is coming soon under the moniker The Misadventures of Tron Bonne, but you'll have to make do without the PocketStation games and the insanely cute voice acting of the little Kobun. >X<



World Republic says "This is a great addition to the Rockman Dash series, and if you loved the original, you'll get a big kick out of this. Those little Kobuns are so cute!" B+





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BLUE SUBMARINE NO.6
 REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
 • 1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM
 30 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED
 ★★★★★ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: After talking my eyes back into their sockets and ratcheting my jaw back into its normal position, all I can say about *Blue Submarine No. 6*, is...wow. Where did this come from and how come I just found out about it? By some degree, the best anime I have seen this year, *Blue Submarine No. 6* is comprised of equal parts gorgeous CGI and anime character designs reminiscent of the legendary *Wings of Honneamise*. Beyond these elements, though, elevating the film above the norm, the camera work is stunning and the overall quality of the production is staggering for a non-theatrical animated feature.

The story takes place in a not-so-distant future. The polar ice caps have begun to melt and as a result the oceans have risen. So our cities are now either completely or partially submerged, forcing us to live on barges or what's left above sea level. The look of the world the art directors have designed around these circumstances is beautiful—wonderfully aquatic, and at the same time, war torn. The peril comes in the form of a human scientist, Zorndyke, who's aligned himself with a new ocean-bearing species—a sort of half-fish/half-human whose ultimate goal is our extinction. Humankind's hope rests in the hands of a new state-of-the-art submarine and its ace pilots Mayumi and Tetsu, who meet reluctantly at the beginning of episode one, and soon partake in some of the most spectacular sea-born battles you will ever witness.

Animation: The use of much CGI obviously freed-up the animators' time to pay extra attention to the hand drawn elements. The result is hard to take your eyes off of.

Character Design: Very *Wings of Honneamise* on the human side, they fall between realistic and exaggerated. The sea creatures and vessels are totally original and unique. What's really remarkable, however, is the submarine-sized whale creature that appears at the end of the episode, and the land/sea mecha designs.

Soundtrack: Dramatic and inspired, it's excellent.

Highlight: When Tetsu saves the life of one of the enemies, after defeating it in a mecha-robot land/sea battle. A wondrous female creature, she is saved when he returns her to the sea. It's the first time we see the new species, and it's quite a moment.

Final Analysis: Go buy this tape right now. And animevillage: dub this well, and quick. If any film right now has a chance of capturing a wide audience, this is it. The kind of work that will help bring anime into the mainstream.



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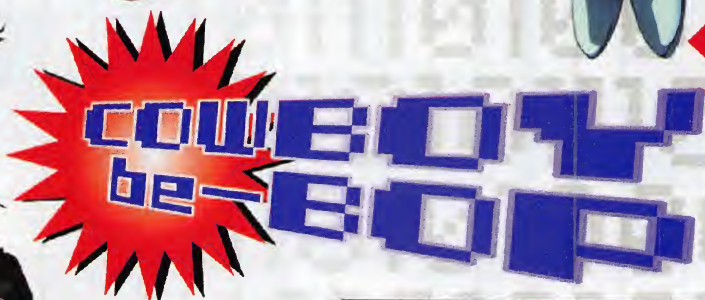
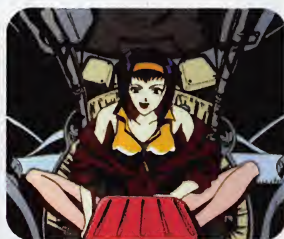




COWBOY BEBOP
 REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON
 •1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM
 50 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED

★★★★ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: While I feel episode one is far superior to episode two, they both warrant your attention. Well, you may actually think episode two is kind of lame. I know I did. But based on episode one, the adventures of these two crazed Bounty Hunters is going to be quite a ride. Spike Spiegel—part James Bond, part Bruce Lee (and a little Lupin, if you ask me) and all anime—and Jet Black, Spike's half-human, half-cyborg ex-cop partner, are a thoroughly entertaining duo. For starters, the series look, from its slick Johnny Quest-meets-James Bond opening theme and graphics, to its wild west-in-outer space guise, is fantastic. In episode one, Spike goes after a crazed drug thief, Asimov. He's got a 2.5 million dollar price tag on his head for stealing the Syndicate's stash of Blood Eye, eye drops that give the user super-human reflexes—and really blood shot eyes! I hadn't yet gotten over the rendered jump gates and slick design of the BeBop (their space ship and home) when a slow motion sequence bout knocked my cowboy hat off. While *BeBop* starts with a bang, episode two goes to the dogs, and, is somewhat lighter and less animated. Still, overall this is a fine two-episode series debut.



Animation: Emotion pulls out all the stops (at least, until you see *Blue Submarine No.6*), melding rendered effects and animation to great effect. Production values are at the top end of the scale.

Character Design: Somewhere between *Lupin* and *Outlaw Star*, they are fantastic, from the architecture to the characters themselves. A+.

Soundtrack: Jazz, Rock, funky western ditties, and catchy ensemble pieces warrant hunting down the soundtrack big time.

Highlight: The first bar fight. Just amazing!

Final Analysis: The animevillage is certainly beginning to fill up with high-class residents. Hot on the heels of *Outlaw Star*—the type of hit that most companies would be happy to come across once a year—it delivers not one, but two that look potentially as good (*Cowboy Bebop*) or better (*Blue Submarine No. 6*).



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POWERDOLLS 2

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•1999 ADV FILMS

35 MINUTES • DUBBED IN ENGLISH

☆☆☆1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

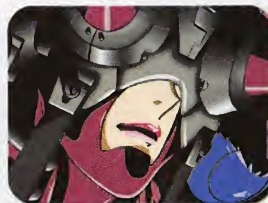
Story: By the year 2540 humans have managed to move off the planet and colonize a new planet called Omni, in order to relieve over-population stress on Earth. Now the two planets are at war. The rebels on Omni have developed special robots called Loaders, piloted by a team of women, to help with the violent struggle. The Power Dolls were decommissioned when it appeared that they were no longer needed. But now a new Loader has appeared and the Dolls are ordered back into action to find out the secrets of the super-powerful new Loader. How is it possible that a human is able to pilot the new Loader with its ultra-fast speed and heavy weapons? This kind of technology can never be allowed to fall into the enemy's hands.

Character Design: The characters, thankfully, didn't go through an extreme redesign from the first movie. There is definitely a new and updated art design, but the characters are still very recognizable, which was a very smart thing to do; I hate it when you can't recognize your favorite characters in a new series. The art style is very bold with the dark-inking style of *Ninja Scroll*. The faces are all very long and the eyes larger than the old series. Altogether, a very nice redesign. The mecha design is good, but it's nothing that really hasn't been done before.

Animation: The animation is extremely clean, and the animators take no shortcuts when the action starts up. This anime was obviously story-boarded well, because the scenes go together smoothly so that there is no confusion on what exactly just happened, even when the action moves at a furious pace.

Dubbing: All dubs should be this good. If you are going to create a dub, then look to this one to see how it should be done. No sound that came out of any character's mouth made me cringe or reach for the mute button. The women all sounded solid and believable.

Soundtrack: There is a great hard



rock/industrial soundtrack that runs through the whole movie. The opening theme is especially cool. I wouldn't mind adding this one to my music collection.

Final Analysis: *PowerDolls 2* has a simplistic plot, which has been done before in other anime, but not many other anime do it this well. It's only 35 minutes long, which isn't much bang for your buck. But then a plot like this shouldn't be any longer than 35 minutes. The writers and the animators managed to make a solid, compact anime with a beginning and an ending that doesn't confuse you or bore you to the point of driving a nail through your forehead. This is a very good example of a girls-with-guns-and-big-robots flick. And the emphasis was not on girls in skimpy outfits, but on their mecha and their ability to blow stuff up. For once the dub doesn't ruin the whole film. If you're a mecha-head, definitely check this one out.



★ 発売直前タイトル



SABER MARIONETTE R

REVIEWED BY CHRISTINA ALEXANDER

•1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM

50 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED

☆☆☆☆ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: *Saber Marionette R* is the prequel to *Saber Marionette J*. On a colony planet where there are no real human females due to an accident, the colonists develop female-looking androids called marionettes. A few of these marionettes had special circuits called maiden circuits, which made them very different from other marionettes. In the country of Romana a young prince named Junior was given two of these marionettes for protection. A mysterious man called Star Face has declared war upon the country of Romana, and he also seems to be in possession of three of these special marionettes.

When Star Face takes over Romana, Junior, his two marionettes, Lime and Cherry, and his father's marionette, Bloodberry, must all flee for their lives. But can Junior really abandon his father, the king of Romana, and his country to Star Face? He must rescue his father and free his country somehow. But his marionettes are so young and inexperienced; they are no match for Star Face's marionettes. And why does Star Face have such a personal vendetta against Romana and its king?

Character design: *Saber M R* has a different art team than the one that did *Saber M J*, but just as good if not better. The character art looks a lot like the art in *El Hazard*. The design of Cherry and Lime really shows that



they are younger in this series, and it's easy to recognize both of them. Bloodberry, it seems, has gone through some extensive redesign.

Animation: The animation is absolutely excellent. No cheating by the animators. Even the parts that are intended to be silly are really smooth. You won't find any stills or choppy animation here.

Voices: The voices are really good. No problems here. But the one that really stands out is the voice of Lime by Megumi Hayashibara. Two words: Lina Inverse. She was an excellent choice for Lime. She is a great voice actress who manages to easily convey Lime's excitable/brainless personality. If you are a fan of the *Slayers* anime and Lina Inverse, then watch this anime if only to hear Ms. Hayashibara's great voice!

Music: The music was well thought out, and is very dramatic with a nice bit of rock thrown in.

Final Analysis: Anime really doesn't get much better than this. It's got a solid and imaginative story, with flawless animation. Definitely a must-see for any anime fan, but to get the full story, the whole *Saber Marionette* series should be seen. Unlike the *J* series, *Saber Marionette R* really has some strong sex themes and a couple of intense scenes. So it's probably not really a good idea to let little siblings watch this one with you.

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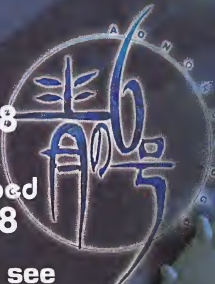
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MAGIC KNIGHT RAYEARTH

REVIEWED BY DAVE SMITH
•1999 ANIMEWORKS
30 MINUTES•DUBBED IN ENGLISH
☆☆☆1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: *Magic Knight Rayearth*, based on the manga by CLAMP (X, *Card Captor Sakura*), is the story of three young girls: Hikaru, Umi, and Fuu—respectively, the hotheaded one, the cool one, and the really cool one. They barely have enough time to meet each other by accident when they're sucked from Tokyo Tower (an in-joke; Tower-san gets a cameo in every CLAMP work) to the fantasy land of Cephiro. There, Master Mage Clef (puffball haircut, maybe 3'6", apocalyptically powerful) informs them that they are the legendary Magic Knights, destined to defeat the wizardly dictator Zagato, rescue Princess Emeraude, and generally save the world. In other words, this is the classic heroic quest, except in a light shoujo style, which is a welcome change from stuff like *Lodoss War*.

Animation: Good TV quality considering the age of the show. Not heavily shoujo, but a bit somewhere just to the shonen of *Sailor Moon*, with better overall quality. The eyes look a little Nadesico-ey, for whatever reason.

Highlight: Hikaru illustrates the fundamental principle of magic in Cephiro: if you want it to happen badly enough, it happens. In this case, boy, does it ever happen. "Fry! Fry! Oxidize and die!" — Savanti Romero.

Soundtrack: Well, the BGM is good enough fantasy-type stuff, but the themes, even the vaunted "Yuzurenai Negai," aren't very good. If you want to do pop, go all the way and create something fast and danceable like the Utena and Nadesico themes; if you want rock, make something with some guts to it.

Character Design: This is where *Rayearth* shines, in my eyes. Unless you really hate this breed of shoujo, it's as good as it gets. There's hardly a single design in this show that I don't like. Fuu is now Our Bright and Shining Lady and Mistress. I have spoken.

Final Analysis: Quite good. It's something different from other fantasy anime that's been commercially released so far. I congratulate AnimeWorks for taking on a tough project. The show runs to four seasons (over 50 episodes), which means if you get hooked, your fix won't run out for a while.



刺激的な2-Dビジュアル



OUTLAW STAR

REVIEWED BY DAVE SMITH
•1999 ANIMEVILLAGE.COM
53 MINUTES•ENGLISH SUBTITLED
☆☆☆☆ ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: Though his creators seem to be followers of classic pulp fiction, Gene Starwind, hero of *Outlaw Star*, certainly isn't one. If he were, he might have known that you should never, ever take a job from a mysterious blonde, especially if it involves a large suitcase with uncertain contents. That is, of course, exactly what he did in the first episode. We begin volume two as he's simultaneously on the run from Taoist wizard space pirates, outlaw mercenaries, other assorted scum and villainy, and his own fear of space travel.

The second installment sees the arrival of some new characters, including Aisha Clanlan, ubiquitous well-built catgirl. Also, the curtain goes down on some familiar faces. The action slows a little in the third episode, during which Gene mostly spends fighting SAS nausea instead of laying down the law, but the fourth more



than makes up for it.

Highlight: The first story arc closes with a showdown against the pirates, as space-craft with massive grappling arms duke it out relative inches from the surface of a star. Congratulations go out to mechanical designer Junya Ishigaki, who's taken the grapple-and-board tactics of the ancient age of sail and adapted them to space combat.

Animation: The animation is great for TV, eschewing the slick AIC style that seems to be popular these days for something a bit rougher—rather like a smoother *Slay-ers* or a more animated *Lodoss War*.

Translation: David Fleming, the translator, isn't familiar to me, but the sub timing is fine and the translation has the smooth readability of a Neil Nadelman job.

Soundtrack: If nothing else, watch the opening sequence. The theme, "Through The Night," cranks easily as hard as in a Van Halen groove or as the Led Zeppies Trigun and contemporary BGC 2040 openings. Here's to anime's discovery of amplification and distortion, 40 years late though it is.

Final Analysis: *Outlaw Star* v.2 might not have quite the same impact as the first volume, but this is still one of the best new series on its way out in this country. Bring on the further adventures of Starwind and company.



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CATNAPPED

REVIEWED BY DAVE HALVERSON

• 1999 PIONEER

75 MINUTES • ENGLISH SUBTITLED

☆☆☆ 1/2 ACTION/ADVENTURE

Story: The strange side of anime just got stranger. A lot stranger. Hold on to your Pikachus, kids, because one of the animation directors of *Akira* and the fellow who did the screenplay for *Armitage III* and *Lain* have a little surprise for you. If you think the Teletubbies are freaky, wait till you get a load of *Catnapped*.

It all begins when Toriyasu, a curious young girl, and her older brother discover that their dog, Papadoll, has gone missing. Turns out Papadoll is now, like, a hundred feet tall, and is eating a city in a parallel universe for reasons...well, we won't go into here. The kids reach this place called Banipal Witt when three talking cats kidnap them and, in a big turbo cat balloon, pass through an undersea time warp. The kids, who turn into cat people as soon as they arrive in Banipal Witt, and their new cat friends must save Papadoll and the city from the evil sorceress behind the caper, Buburina, who's touch turns any living thing into a balloon. Alrighty then.

Animation: Unexpectedly, *Catnapped* turns out to be a big-budget feature. Both the animation and art direction are excellent.

Character Design: Well, there are a lot of cats in it, Papadoll gave me nightmares, and I suppose if I were going to be annihilated by a cat, Buburina would be my first choice. Weird.

Soundtrack: Fruity, as you'd expect, but very well done.

Highlight: Oh, definitely Papadoll when he's eatin' buildings, residents and anything else he can sink his teeth into.

Final Analysis: A super-high-quality toon for kids that adults will probably understand more. *Kiki's Delivery* service it ain't, but it's certainly a highly recommended fairy tale for kids of all ages.



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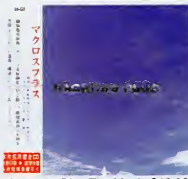
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2. Cowboy Bebop bandai
3. Outlaw Star bandai
4. Bubblegum Crisis 2040 ADV
5. Perfect Blue manga

C. Alex

1. Princess Monoke miramax
2. Rurouni Kenshin sony
3. Escaflowne bandai
4. Combustible Campus Guardress
5. Bastard pioneer

D. Smith

1. Trigun pioneer
2. Serial Experiments Lain pioneer
3. Bubblegum Crisis 2040 ADV
4. Rev. Girl Utena Soft. Sculptors
5. Outlaw Star bandai

Gamers' Republic COMPUTER & CONSOLE ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE anime top 5 adv films and gamers' republic

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4. Macross Plus the Movie Manga
5. Tekken The Movie ADV



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FRANK FRAZETTA

From FAKK 2, the highly anticipated new *Heavy Metal* movie, based on the artwork of Frank Frazetta. From the right: Julie a.k.a. F.A.K.K. 2, Lord Tyler, and, far left, a Frazetta limited-edition sculpture. See them all at www.mooreaction.com.



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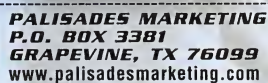
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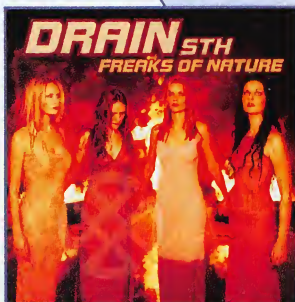
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Gamers' Re(public) Music Reviews

Hard Rock is such a general term. It could mean VAST or Econoline Crush on one end of the spectrum, or Sammy Hagar (dude, talk to Eddie, seriously) or, like, Tom Petty on the other. Excuse me, I think I'm going to hurl now... Okay, thanks for waiting, now where were we? Oh yeah, with bands like Chevelle, CycleFly, Korn, and Lamb rising to fame, we need a new category. This isn't metal, but it's certainly elevated above the hard rock moniker, don't you think? Oh well, until they (whoever *they* are) come up with something better, hard rock will have to do. If you like hard rock, buy this CD right now. If, however, you want to keep living your life listening to drum machines and DJs with car parts around their necks, go right ahead. I'm kidding of course; DJs (and people with car parts around their necks) are cool! But you should still buy this CD. What are the odds of a band comprised of four gorgeous Swedish babes being able to write, sing, and play masterful crunching anthems, articulate acoustical ballads and mesmerizing chants and battle cries? Like a zillion to one, I'd say.



Drain sth, with their second album *Freaks of Nature*, prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are ready to claim their rightful place as the new queens of rock. If you can't find something to like here, check your pulse. I predict big—no, huge—things for Drain sth if *Freaks* gets the recognition it deserves. Every track is at least very good, but most of them are great. At least three are easily good enough to hit the charts with a vengeance. "Simon Says" with its rap-inspired battle cry, is totally intense, "I Wish" is simply enchanting, and "Alive" will be stuck in your head for at least a month.

Dave Halverson

Drain sth-Freaks of Nature
MVG Records, Domestic

A-

FOLLOWING THE WILDLY POPULAR *GRAND THEFT AUTO* SERIES, COLIN ANDERSON, LEAD SOUND DESIGNER AT DMA DESIGN, TALKS ABOUT THE LONG-AWAITED SEQUEL *GTA2* AND WHAT WE CAN EXPECT IN THE NEW SOUNDTRACK. HERE IS WHAT COLIN HAD TO SAY ABOUT THE NEW PROJECT.

GAMERS' REPUBLIC: CAN YOU GIVE US SOME INFO ABOUT YOUR HISTORY IN AUDIO AND GAME DESIGN? WHEN DID YOU START WRITING MUSIC?

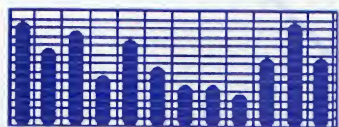
Colin Anderson: I've been working for DMA Design now for just over six years. I came straight from university where I was taking a course in computer science and had a great interest in audio and music primarily, and at that time it was still easy for keen amateurs to get into the game industry, which is not so much the case now. A couple of friends and I put together a demo and we sent it around to some companies. DMA responded, saying "Yes, we're interested," so we met with them and at that point they were expanding following the success of "Menace," and we joined them in 1993. From then on I worked as the only full-time sound designer/musician for about two years, and then David Jones, who's the head of the company, asked me to help the audio department, so we hired two more full-time sound designers and an audio programmer. We've been growing ever since. We're very lucky because David understands the importance of game audio and sound design. There aren't many companies who have someone like that in charge who are willing to devote their resources to making sure the game sounds good.

GR: TELL US ABOUT THE NEW GAME, *GTA2*. WHAT CAN WE EXPECT IN TERMS OF THE MUSICAL THEME FOR THIS NEW SOUNDTRACK?

CA: Well, it's really just a continuation. We set a standard in the first *GTA*, looking at the way the radio system was going to work, and that's primarily going to hold true for *GTA 2* as well. We're still planning on using the radio station format. This time we're actually using some real bands supplied by Terry Donovan, who works for Take 2 Interactive and is responsible for all liaisons with record companies. He was formerly with Arista Records UK as their A&R guy before he moved to Take 2. He's used his contacts there to get some bands and we've got some really cool acts like The Flytronics, a band on Moving Shadow Records, which is a really hip drum and bass label based in London. Moving Shadow is headed by Rob Playford, who was the producer on both Goldie albums. There's about five tracks total, which will be supplied by outside bands, and at the moment we expect somewhere between 20-25 tracks in house. There will be about 25-30 tracks in the final game.

GR: HOW WILL THE MUSIC IN *GTA2* DIFFER FROM *GTA* AND *GTA LONDON 1969*? BEFORE COMPOSING THE MUSIC DO YOU USUALLY HAVE AN IDEA OF THE GENERAL STYLE OF MUSIC YOU WILL BE WRITING?

CA: In *GTA2*, the focus has been switched from cars to gangs. We've decided to base the radio stations around each gang this time rather than specific cars. So, on any given level



GAMERS' REPUBLIC INTERVIEWS

COLIN ANDERSON OF

DMA DESIGN



DMA DESIGNS' AUDIO TEAM (FROM FAR LEFT, CLOCKWISE): FIONA ROBERTSON (TRAINEE SOUND DESIGNER), RAYMOND USHER (SENIOR AUDIO PROGRAMMER), ALLAN WALKER (SOUND DESIGNER), COLIN ANDERSON (AUDIO MANAGER), AND STUART ROSS (COMPOSER).

there will be 3-4 different radio stations. There will be one commercial channel which plays pop music, there will be another local channel which will play more obscure music, and then there will be three gang stations, because there will be three gangs on each map. It will also depend on which gang's turf you're on.

As far as style goes, in the first GTA we had everything from hip-hop to country western. This time we've got everything from hip-hop to Russian surf music. We've got dance music, heavy metal, pop rock, glam rock, '50s rock 'n' roll, new age country. Think of a genre and we've probably got one track that'll have it covered.

GR: WHAT KIND OF MUSICAL EXAMPLES DO YOU GATHER AS REFERENCE POINTS? DO YOU STICK TO A CERTAIN STYLE BEFORE WRITING THE MUSIC?

CA: Sometimes we write in a style that we know we want to have in the game: like in the first game we knew we wanted to have a country western track so we went out and made one. But sometimes we find that we get some good tracks that come along when you're not trying to write in a specific style. An example of that would be the heavy metal track in GTA. We were kind of just mucking about and it kind of came out of our jam session.

GR: DO YOU TEND TO WORK MORE WITH LIVE OR SYNTHESIZED INSTRUMENTS?

CA: It tends to be more live instruments. It's usually the style of music that dictates what we use. It depends on whether we're doing a dance track or a rock 'n' roll track. We try to make everything as authentic as we possibly can.

GR: WHAT RECORDING FORMAT WILL THE MUSIC IN GTA2 USE?

CA: We use ProTools, which is a digital multi-track machine that records to hard disk rather than tape. That gives us close to 32 different channels to record to simultaneously, so you can layer drums and guitars, bass and vocals and whatever else you need. And because it's digital, it's non-linear



so we can swap different takes around and splice them together without having to worry about getting the perfect take.

GR: IS GAME MUSIC STILL UNDERAPPRECIATED OR IS IT FINALLY CATCHING ON?

CA: That's the million-dollar question. I would have to say obviously, from an audio person's perspective, the answer would have to be yes. I would love it if we got as much funding and resources as the graphics guy or the programming team. At DMA design we can't grumble; personally, I feel that we're afforded a lot more resources here than if we were at any other company. From an industry point of view, it's shocking at how underappreciated and undervalued audio can be.

GR: WHAT WOULD YOU PERSONALLY LIKE TO SEE CHANGED ABOUT THE GAME AUDIO INDUSTRY?

CA: I guess the standardization of hardware would be a good place to start.

GR: WHAT GAMES ARE YOU MOST IMPRESSED WITH IN REGARDS TO THEIR AUDIO?

CA: Well, let's see. Obviously Half-Life comes to mind. LucasArts does great stuff over there as well.

But again they're very fortunate to have the resources to do it. Unreal, of course, I'd also have to mention.

GR: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO ANYONE WANTING TO BREAK INTO GAME MUSIC AND SOUND DESIGN?

CA: Probably the best thing to do is to study as many games with great audio as you can, and get a good idea of what it is you think matters in audio, whether it's the way sounds are used or the sounds themselves. And then get a good demo together of a game that's already well-known—something like Tomb Raider or Quake—and generate your own sounds for it, or if you want to do music, write your own score for it, because that way you can instantly show somebody, "Here's what I would have done for that title." And that's a lot easier than pitching something cold like, "Isn't this a great tune for a fictitious computer game?"



電子情報技術



STAR WARS:
ROGUE SQUADRON

PLAY AS NABOO FIGHTER

This code will allow you to play as the Naboo Starfighter from *Star Wars: Episode One: The Phantom Menace*. This is a two-part code. First, input HALIFAX? as the code and select Enter Code. Then input IYNGWIE! as the code and select Enter Code again. Go back to the Start screen and select your game. The ship will now be one of the selectable vehicles in the spaceport. Not only is the Naboo Starfighter fast, but its secondary weapons are Seeker Torpedoes. Additionally, the ship will be saved in the cargo for future play.

THAT'S RIGHT, YOU DA MAN

If you think that the game is too easy for you, the following code will make it more difficult. At the Passcodes screen, enter ACE and select Enter Code.

NOT ROUGE, ROGUE

To change the face of Luke Skywalker on the Start screen, enter the following code at the Passcodes screen: HARDROCK. Select Enter Code. Go back to the Start screen and the face should change. If not, wait a few seconds until the game demo begins. Press Start to return to the Start screen and it'll appear. (It's scary, too!)

ACCESS ALL LEVELS

With the following code, you will open up all of the levels in the game, including the three bonus levels. At the Passcodes screen, enter DEADDACK and select Enter Code. When you go back to the Select Level screen, you will be able to choose any area.

CRUIS'N THE UNIVERSE

If you are tired of fighting the Imperial forces with the typical *Star Wars* fighters, then this code is for you. At the Passcodes screen enter KOELSCH and select Enter Code. In the spaceport, the V-Wing has now been turned into a large, boxy, two-door, 1969 Buick. The vehicle can only be used in those areas available for the V-Wing... Or can it?

PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC WHITE BOY

To play all the music from the game, enter MAESTRO at the Passcodes screen. Select Enter Code. Go back to the Start screen and select Options, then select Showroom. Choose concert hall and listen to all of the great *Star Wars* music. Also, by pressing the Z-Trigger at this screen, you can toggle through the game's ship and droid models.

GIVE ME MORE CHARACTERS AND STAGES

You will receive a new character or stage by completing the game with each of the 10 start-up characters. The final character to unlock is called Edge Master.

YOU LOOK MAHVELOUS BABY

If you think that your character needs a new look, simply press the 'Y' button at the character select screen. You will be able to select from two or three outfits, depending on which character you are choosing.

MUSEUM MUSINGS AND MISFIT OUTFITS

Soul Calibur features a museum that includes character artwork. By completing all of the battles in Mission mode, you will reveal hidden artwork in the museum. You will also gain access to new outfits for several of the characters. Additionally, by completing the Mission battles, you will gain access to various options in the museum such as an exhibition theatre, character profiles, and a new opening cinema. You will also reveal a new game play mode called Extra Survival.

THIS DOUBLE-EDGE SWORD JUST ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH

To receive access to new weapons for each of the characters, unlock Edge Master (see above) and successfully complete all of the battles in Mission mode. Once that is accomplished, hold the 'L' button when selecting a character. You will be able to use a new weapon.

KNOW THE UNKNOWN SOUL

To play as the unknown soul of each character, unlock Edge Master and then at the character selection screen hold down the 'R' button. You will play as a transparent version of the character.

BURN IT DOWN

The most powerful character in the game is Inferno. So naturally, gaining access to him/her/it is quite the task. First, you must unlock all of the characters, areas receive every picture in Mission mode. Then play the Arcade mode with Xianghua. When you select her character, you need to choose her third outfit by pressing 'Y' + 'A'. To save yourself time, set the number of rounds to 'One' and the level difficulty to 'Easy.' Complete the game with her. After the game's credits are finished, Inferno will appear to the right of Edge Master.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE BAD GUY?

The following tip will allow you to change the perspective of the replay camera to watch the defeated opponent instead of the winner. After the battle is won, press the 'B' button. The camera will automatically change to the loser's perspective.



SOUL CALIBUR





UM JAMMER LAMMY

ACCESS CHEAT MODE

To access the cheat screen, at the Croc 2 title screen, hold down L1 and input the following code: Triangle, Left, Left, Right, Square, Up, Up, Left and Circle. Then select a game and when the game begins, hold L2 and press R2. You will now be able to enable all the cheats in the game.

BEAT JUMPING GOBBO

In Sailor Village, the Gobbo challenges Croc to jump higher than him. First, stand next to the trampoline with the jumping Gobbo and press the X button twice. Then, while in the air, before stomping the ground, press X again to do a super jump.

UNLIMITED LIVES

To receive an unlimited supply of lives, at the title screen hold down L1 and input the following code: Circle, Down, Left, Up, Right, Triangle and Down.

PARAPPA THE RAPPA LEVELS

To access the Parappa levels, successfully complete the game, then return to the level selection screen. Press Right until you get to the Parappa bonus levels.

2P PARAPPA AND LAMMY GAME

The following tip will give you access to the two-player game where you and a friend can play as Parappa and Lammy. Simply finish all of the Parappa levels and the two-player levels will now be accessible.

CUSTOMIZE THE NOTES AND LYRICS

The following will allow you to choose the designs for the notes and lyrics in the designs for the notes and lyrics in the Um Jammer Lammy. First, load the game. When Lammy appears at the title screen, press the reset button on the system. Let the game reload. On the title screen, a new menu will appear next to Lammy's guitar. You can now customize the lyrics and notes.

CROC 2

LEVEL SELECT

From the main menu, select the Load Game option and chose a game you saved. When the prompt to insert the Rumble Pak appears, press L and B for about one second, then press A. You can now access any of the levels in the game.

LEVEL SKIP

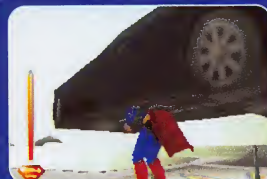
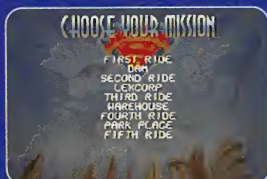
To skip the current level you are playing and advance to the next level, at the Main Menu, press the C buttons in the following order: top, bottom, left, right. You will hear Superman confirm your code. Start a new game. Once the game has started, press Start, top C, and bottom C. You can continue to do this on each level. By the way, if you do not have any saved games on your controller pak, you will be prompted to save the game when doing this code. You can then use this to do the Level Select code above.

IT'S A BIRD, IT'S A PLANE, IT'S A CAR

The following will allow you to turn Superman into a car. Start a Practice mode game. Grab and pick up a car and fly through all of the rings around the Lexcorp building. After you fly through the last ring, Superman will automatically be standing in the car.



SUPERMAN



MONSTER TRUCK MADNESS



For all you monster truck fans and code mongrels out there, we unearthed a slew of codes for this new, unique N64 racing game (reviewed on page 82 in this issue). The following are inputted at the Enter Codes menu. At the Main Menu, select Codes.

ALL MY FRIENDS DRIVE THE LOW RIDERS

The following code will change the game from Monster Truck Madness to Low Rider Monster Truck Madness. At the Main Menu, select the Codes option and input the following code: YRDR. You will receive a text message saying, "Ouch Monster Clash." Now all of the trucks are low riders.

HONK IF YOU'RE HORNY

To use a randomly assigned horn noise, press "Down" on the cross pad.

EXCUSE ME!

To belch your way to the finish line, press "Up" on the cross pad. There are a variety of noises to hear including gas from both ends of the body.

LET'S CUT THE KID'S STUFF

The following codes will allow you to warp to the last two tracks of the expert level:

ALPINE CHALLENGE: 101231M5JLF^C979S0D
DEATH TRAP LEVEL: 404564P8M><DFC^CV32KC

INDIANA JONES

The following code will help you find and enter the ancient temple in the Ruins level. Enter G^Nj2Lo (beginners level code) to access the Ruins level. When you start the race, go through the first checkpoint and veer left with the track. Then, instead of taking the next left on the track, keep going forward off the track to the building ahead of you. The entrance to the temple is on the right side.

I'VE GOT A CRUSH ON YOU

This code will help you crush your opponents' trucks for a short amount of time. Get the shrinker missile and launch it when you are near the enemy trucks. After it shrinks them, hit them with your truck. When they return to full size, the body of the truck will be smashed for a little while.

eXISTENZ

BUENA VISTA HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Anyone who's imagined a life-like virtual-reality game will enjoy *eXistenZ*, David Cronenberg's film detailing the experience of game designer Allegra Gellar (Jennifer Jason Leigh) as she unveils her next-generation VR game, *eXistenZ*, to a group of game testers. You see, in the future, hardcore gamers will have bioports (a small plug at the base of the spine) installed into which they'll plug game pods, little rubbery devices made of living tissue that connect to the bioports via umbilical cords. The game pod takes over your senses and transports you to new worlds, populated by other human players as well as computer-generated NPCs, and lets you play what amounts to extremely realistic RPGs. Inside the game, though, it's still a computer game, so although everything is so real it blurs the line between virtual and reality, the other characters still wait for certain prompts or situations to happen before the plot can move forward. Cronenberg's insight into the mechanics of modern RPGs is both satirical and right on, and with supporting characters like Willem Dafoe and Ian Holm, the reactions to this new reality are quite thought provoking and entertaining.

Of course, this being a Hollywood-type thriller, we need conflict, so how's this: the realist rebels are out to destroy Allegra, since she's a threat to the real world. At the testing session, they attack, and she falls under the care of Ted Pikul (Jude Law), a new PR intern for her company who's never played any of her games; in fact, he doesn't even sport a bioport. As they flee from the bad guys, they bounce between the game and reality, and both the main characters and the viewers start to wonder what's real and what's virtual. I'll warn you now, the ending has more twists and turns than a plate of chinese noodles (but ask for the Special), and the closer you get to the end, the more bombs Cronenberg unloads. And although non-gamers may not get it, us hardcore gamers know what's good. So where can I get a bioport installed?

Rated R; on VHS and DVD
Available now



BAPTISM OF BLOOD

ASIA PULP CINEMA

If you're throwing a Halloween movie party, and looking for a flick that's got an interesting story, plot twists, decent writing, and, most importantly, some really gruesome scenes, look up this film at Central Park Media's web site. It's the story of a Japanese movie starlet with a disease that scars her beautiful face and leaves her crippled, but her doctor has a machine that will allow her to transfer her brain to a new body. Her plan: have a child, and take over her young and beautiful body! While there isn't the axe-murdering suspense of *Friday the 13th* or the blood-spattering gore of a Freddy movie, watching the machine in action will send the more sensitive viewers running out of the room, while the rest of us watch the scenes in horror and then mock our friends when they return. For you Resident Evil fans, some of the action and dialogue will fully remind you of those games. And just wait for the ending; if you can figure out the convoluted route that the director took to explain the situations, perhaps you should start making movies yourself. Despite some hokiness and holes



in the story, it will hook you in as you try to figure out what'll happen next. Just note when the machine goes into motion; if you can rewind quick enough, you'll send your friends out of the room every time with that one.

Unrated (brief nudity, sexuality and graphic bloody messes); on VHS
Available now



THE CUTTING ROOM FLOOR

• IT'S THE ARCHIES: Tommy O'Haver is set to direct an upcoming *Archie* film, and so far we've heard that Melissa Joan Hart is slated to star as Betty and Scott Foley should be on as Reggie. As of press time, either Rose McGowan or Charisma Carpenter may play Veronica, but we're still waiting to see (a) who'll play Archie, and (b) why we should care.



More on both soon. • BOND IS NOT ENOUGH: Another Bond movie hits in November, starring Pierce Brosnan, but word has come down that it'll be his last. The new Bond? We hear Jason Patric is in the running, but I'll keep pulling for Rowan Atkinson. He could be the Peter Sellers of Bond, don't you think? Besides, I'll always



turn back to Mr. Connery for my real Bond fixes. • SMASHING, BABY: The Corvette Stingray driven by Felicity Shagwell in *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* has been bought at auction for \$121,000.

Decipher Inc., a game company that has an upcoming *Austin Powers* card game, used it as a promotional vehicle (pun intended) at the San Diego Comicon back in August. • When *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* premiered in England in August, it included footage that the MPAA wouldn't allow in the U.S. Also, it got a rating that allowed anyone 15 or older to see it. Guess we'll wait for the DVD to see what we missed...as long as it doesn't involve Saddam Hussein.



cinematrix
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edited by eddfear

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FALLOUT

Should you wish to put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard), please write to:

Fallout, Gamers' Republic, 32123 Lindero Canyon Road, Suite 111,
Westlake Village, CA 91361 USA (editorial@gamersrepublic.com).

Dear GR,

Yeah, I too read Bing's rant in NG and thought, How nice to be brain-dead and bought by Sony. You gotta wonder.

Hey. Thanks for all the nice DC coverage; I can hardly wait. (You're the only rag who's doin' it right, too!) But as I'm into DC fighting/fighting-action games I'd love to see some more about mid-term titles like Dead Or Alive 2, Tekken Tag Tournament (should be sweet) and Oni. A bit more about our old friend Virtua Fighter 3 would also be nice.

You want to know what I mean by "doin' it right"? Well, while a certain SoBK-company magazine editor makes snide remarks about Sophitia's "face-sitting moves" in Soul Blade, you at GR actually go get the first Sophitia-in-action Soul Calibur screens printed. Vive la difference.

I also read that Star Gladiator 2 (or Plasma Sword) is coming to Dreamcast mid-term. Any info you guys could pass along would be appreciated, as well as any on a port for Street Fighter EX 2 Plus.

Thanks for the neat Power Stone screens — you guys continue to amaze.

Mark Coleman,
Sarasota, FL

Dear Mark,

It's decided. As the magnificent blokes at Sega Saturn Magazine might have put it, Bing Gordon: tosspot by royal command. Also to be gotten when the revolution comes, anybody who fails to show proper respect for the charming young women of Soul Calibur. Sophitia's got nothing on Ivy's squeal-like-a-pig-beyotch throw, though (got a perfect shot of that one for my Top Ten list).

As for info on DC fighting titles, let's go down the line. Dead Or Alive 2 is shaping up nicely. We've put up some good coverage of that one on-line at SegaNet, and when we start hearing about the DC version, you'll see it in print ASAP. Tekken Tag for the DC is only rumor at this point. Oni's not official either, but now that Rockstar Games has

the console rights to that and Halo, Dreamcast versions of one or both of Bungie's up-and-comers seem to be in the cards. Meanwhile, check out our Oni feature in this issue. Virtua Fighter 3 will get a full review when the tuned-up, versus-mode-included U.S. version ships later in the fall. Star Gladiator 2 on DC is official, but it's been delayed a couple of times, and Capcom has been reticent with information and media. We'll see what the future brings.

Thanks for all the letters, Mark, and we hope you keep enjoying what we have to send your way.

Dear Gamer's Republic,

Hi, I just have to tell you, your magazine is wicked cool! I am a new reader of your magazine and you are doing a great job. I especially love the anime reviews.

I love the game Bust-A-Groove, and I'm wondering if 989 Studios will release Bust-A-Groove 2? Also, will there be a Parasite Eve 2? I love that game too.

Ariel Marsh

Ariel,

Anime is the source of all that is good in the universe. In particular, the Outlaw Star theme song. AI DAKE! Thanks for the artwork, too.

Bust-A-Move 2 (the name was changed to Bust-A-Groove over here on account of trademark conflicts with Taito, which is why the announcer on the select screens sounds so weird) probably won't come to the U.S. I'm not entirely clear on the details, but the music was licensed in a different fashion. Enix didn't just sign up Avex Trax and have them do the whole job. Basically, 989 would have to go through a lot of legal hassle concerning licenses and royalties and so forth if it wanted to publish the game in the U.S. It's about as import-friendly as games get, though, so see if you can hunt down a Japanese copy via mail order.

As for Parasite Eve 2, it's not part of the next round of Square titles (give

those a look, though; Legend of Mana is an astounding work of art), but the original had an awful lot of ominous foreshadowing going on at the end, didn't it? I'd say a sequel is pretty much a given, one of these days.

Gamer's Republic,

I can't imagine people getting uptight about Sega's "loss" of [Bernie Stolar]. Granted COO is a rather mig management chunk to change, but think of exactly what Bernie did for Sega over his reign. Err...not much. He certainly pissed off a lot of people (like developers, and a lot of loyal Sega fans). This guy has about as much foresight and industry insight as the dude who served me up a Whopper last week. Yeah, I'm a bit bitter. After all, I am the proud owner of Shining Force III, probably the best one-third of a game you can find. So what's worse, not giving the kid candy, or giving him just a lick so he gets addicted, then taking it away? Sigh...

shentina@earthlink.net

Shentina,

I see both good and bad in Bernie's tenure at Sega. The death of the Saturn was a sad occasion, yes, and the SFIII situation sucked. However, it seems to me that cutting Sega's losses and backing the Dreamcast, instead of holding on to a losing horse, might turn out to be the wisest course in the end.

As for what he did for Sega, it will definitely be interesting to see how things pan out as far as his importance to the company. He was the face of the Dreamcast to retailers—who seemed to really like and respect him—and the mass market, and Sega seems to have done a good job getting recognition and shelf space under him. His replacement, in comparison, is relatively untried and unfamiliar. The fact of the matter, though, is that the Dreamcast cranks, I'm buying one, and so is anyone else with sense, Bernie or no Bernie.



NAUGHTY DOG'S JASON RUBIN

► CRASH TEAM RACING INTERVIEW, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

GR: SOME PEOPLE ARE TOUTING THIS ENGINE AS ONE OF THE BEST ON THE PLAYSTATION. I GUESS YOU'VE LEARNED A LOT, PROGRAMMING ON THE PS SINCE BASICALLY DAY ONE.

Rubin: Naughty Dog was often told that Crash 2's 3D engine was the most powerful in 1997. In 1998, the industry seemed mixed between Crash 3 and Spyro. There was also talk that Crash 3's engine was not truly "free roaming." Naughty Dog really wanted to make a point of leaving the PlayStation with the best game, and best engine, of 1999.

CTR's engine is fully free roaming, and uses multiple new technologies that we came up with specifically for CTR. The engine has been written from scratch by Danny Chan, Greg Omi, Gavin James, and Greg Tavares, the programmers on CTR. We look at the engine battle as a two-front war: the game must look good in the distance, and it must look good when it's up close. In the distance, CTR has no pop-in, no fog, no pixel swim in level of detail, and no gouraud. In short, when you look off to the other side of the track (and you often can) and fixate on a tree or a wall, then it should look textured and high detail from the moment you first see it until you drive next to it. This is a first for a 3D engine on the PlayStation. And when you are really close to an object in CTR it looks good as well. There is no "rez-out" (big pixel stretching), no drop out, no warping, and the textures are high detail. Again, this is a first for the PlayStation.

Who would have thought that the PlayStation could go this far? CTR's engine could have been a free-roaming platformer engine had we wanted to do one. If anyone had asked me during the making of Crash 1 whether or not I thought that the CTR engine was possible for a free roamer, I would have answered "no." Little did we know what six years of experience could do for the PlayStation.

I can tell you that Naughty Dog is using some of the technology that we created for CTR on our next title...for PlayStation2!

GR: NAME ONE ASPECT THAT MAKES CRASH RACING UNIQUE.

Rubin: The Turbo System that Dan Arey and Evan Wells, our game designers, have implemented in CTR is both unique, and all important, during play. There are four ways to get turbos in CTR. The first two are standard. You can get turbos by crossing turbo pads and turbo power-ups. But the other two methods are far more important, and totally unique to CTR. You can get turbos through a power-slide turbo. To power slide, the player hops using R1, and then holds, while in a turn. While in the Power Slide, gas builds up in the kart engine and the smoke coming out of the tail pipes turns black for a short time. While it turns black, if the player hits L1, then the player gets a turbo boost... but remains in the slide. The smoke will turn black again after a moment, and the player can get a second, larger, boost, and still remain in the slide. Then, the smoke will turn black a third time, and the player can get the largest slide boost yet, pushing the kart into a wheelie!... but still remaining in a controlled power slide. After this, the player can hop and turn again to start the slide over and get three new power slide turbos. In addition, by hopping off of the top of bumps, the player can get the fourth type of turbo in CTR, the "hang time turbo." Simply put, the longer the character "hangs" in the air, the bigger the turbo the player gets when they land. Half a second is a small boost, a second is a medium boost, and a second and a half gets a super boost!

What really makes this design exciting is how a player can learn to chain these turbos together. Once the player can chain these events, they can really compete for best times and challenge friends to find a faster way around the track. As an example, a player can Power slide around a corner and get three boosts. They will then be going fast enough to get a high enough hang time to get a boost from a small bump. This will make them go even faster so that when they hit the next big jump, they can get a huge amount of air and get a massive boost! Maybe they can even jump high enough to take a short cut? There are many combinations like these on every track.

The turbo system is not only unique, it is the basis of good gameplay in CTR, and the player will learn to use the system continually. This guarantees that CTR has a completely new type of control and gameplay for a kart game - a system that is easy to get into, but wonderfully deep to master.

GR: WHAT ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF WITH THE GAME?

Rubin: The four-player engine and four-player speed is unmatched on the PlayStation. Likewise, we feel that there has never been a four-player game on the PlayStation that is as much fun to play. It's amazing to watch testers who have been playing for days still mocking each other and jumping out of their seats when they win a race. And CTR's multiplayer battle mode? Let's just say we've lost hundreds of hours of productivity around here while "testing" this mode!

GR: I LOVE THE LOOK OF THIS GAME. I'M ASSUMING THE SAME ARTIST WHO WORKED ON PAST GAMES IS ON THE PROJECT?

Rubin: Thank you! Yes, the quality of the art is entirely due to the fact that the artists on CTR are the same great artists from the rest of the Crash series. There is simply nobody else that can do the Crash world like they can. Bob Rafei, Charlotte Francis,

Eric Iwasaki, Erick Pangilinan, Rob Titus, Malcolm Hee, and Bruce Straley are incredibly fast as well, which has allowed us to do the entire art load of the project in 8 months!!!

GR: IS THIS A GAME FOR CRASH FANS AS MUCH AS RACING FANS?

Rubin: I think that both race fans and Crash fans will appreciate CTR. There is an adventure mode that, besides the fact that you are racing a kart, is very similar structurally to the Crash setup in the past. Gems, Crystals, and Relics are familiar collectibles to any Crash fan, and we have added Trophies and CTR Tokens to the mix to make 100 percent even more impressive.

Also, I think that fans of the Crash series have been dabbling with Racing from the beginning. Even Crash 1 had the Hog race, which was one of everyone's favorite levels from Crash 1. Since then, we have had a bab-bear race (did I mention that he is a driver in CTR?), a tiger cub race (also a driver in CTR!), a biplane area, a jetski race, and of course the motorcycle area. Crash fans have always been ready for racing!

As race fans ourselves, we have also made sure to keep the kart racing true to the racing fans heart, with drifting, jumping, and an incredible amount of driving fun in each of the levels. We even went out and raced on real kart tracks to feel for ourselves what additional nuances we could capture and bring to the game.

GR: IT SEEMS THAT THE GAME HAS AN APPEAL THAT TRANSCENDS THE RACING GENRE.

Rubin: Yes, as I mentioned above, the Adventure mode is almost platform game like. And the Battle mode is closer to a fighting or combat game than a racer. There is truly something for everyone. It is because we cater to such a diverse audience that I feel CTR will be our most popular Crash game ever!

GR: HOW ARE YOU DEALING WITH THE BALANCING ISSUE? NO CHEAP AI, RIGHT?

Rubin: Balancing is one of the most difficult areas of a kart game. We have stayed away from the cheap AI tactics that Mario Kart uses, but also tried to keep up the challenge without making the game impossible for novice gamers. Naughty Dog also avoided the straight path following that the AI characters do in Mario Kart and the other kart games. We have used a lot of experience from the lessons we learned during the making of the Crash series in balancing CTR. I think that we have achieved a great result. Time will tell.

GR: WHY A RACING GAME AND NOT ANOTHER CRASH PLATFORMER?

Rubin: After Crash 1, Naughty Dog had a huge number of improvements that we wanted to make. Crash 2 was the result. After Crash 2 finished, we still had a good number of ideas, and we also wanted to experiment with alternate gameplay modes like the biplane, jetski, and motorcycle. These ideas became Crash 3. But after Crash 3, we felt that we had finally done everything that we had set out to do with the Crash Platform series. We needed new challenges, and Racing is our other favorite genre. It was a natural evolution.

GR: CRASH IS THE SINGLE MOST POPULAR U.S. CHARACTER EVER IN JAPAN. TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE THIS SUCCESS?

Rubin: Naughty Dog is the first and only U.S. developer to create a million selling game in Japan...in the history of video games. The only other foreign developer that has achieved this mark, a British developer, did it with a character that was already widely popular in Japan before they began making games with the character. Naughty Dog's success in Japan is possibly our greatest achievement...but we can't take all, or even most, of the credit. We owe our success to the work done in Japan by Sony Computer Entertainment Japan's production, marketing, PR, and sales staff. Their knowledge of the Japanese market is the key reason for Crash's success in that territory, and their advice has helped us make a better overall game for the US and European markets as well.

GR: SO, IS THIS, WITHOUT QUESTION, THE LAST WE'LL SEE OF CRASH BANDICOOT.

Rubin: Not necessarily. Naughty Dog will not be making any more Crash products. But Universal, to whom Naughty Dog contracted the Crash rights, could always bring out a Crash game on its own.

GR: WILL YOU HAVE ANY SAY IN THE GAME? A LOOK AT MILESTONES?

Rubin: Naughty Dog will be too busy on our next projects to become involved. We wish Crash, Universal, and any developer they may choose the best of luck.

GR: ONE LAST QUESTION: HOW DO YOU THINK PS2 WILL CHANGE THE COMPLEXION OF GAMING?

Rubin: I could probably write a three page answer to this question, but I will leave you hanging until we are ready to show our PlayStation2 project. Soon, I promise!

► LEGACY OF KAIN: SOUL REAVER, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 67

level. There is another main element in Soul Reaver as well—one which makes me particularly happy—and that's platforming, and lots of it. Raziel's gliding ability coupled with a flawless camera make for intense, nail-biting aerial antics, adding an air of skill to the otherwise meticulous gameplay.

Once you reach a Lieutenant's chamber, a real-time cinema ensues (spoken by top-notch voice actors, of course) prior to battle—a departure from Blood Omen's CG variety. Although the real-time polygonal models don't impress as much as CG versions would, the seamless nature of the game makes up for the lack of it and the loading that goes along with it. The only way you know an event is cinematic is by the sudden letterboxing of the screen. There's never any loading in Soul Reaver. Once the letterboxing subsides it's back to the action. And the Lieutenants don't go down easy. There's a certain method needed to damage each one, which will first need to be discovered and then carried out. Each time you defeat one, Raziel gains a new ability that will then play a key role in your next destination and in finding hidden Glyphs, which give Raziel immense powers.

After your first meeting with Kain, you are not granted but cursed with his mighty Soul Reaver (hence the name), which becomes a part of Raziel's body. As long as Raziel's spirit gauge is full, its awesome power and pyrotechnic splendor is at your command. The Soul Reaver is one of the most wicked weapons I've ever seen in a video game, and fire intensifies it even more (make sure to seek out the Fire Reaver in your travels).

Beyond the Soul Reaver, Raziel will gain swimming, climbing, constricting, and projectile abilities. Each is fully realized within the game. Another word to the wise: once you arrive in an area it is smart to find and activate the jump gate, so that you'll be able to warp directly back at any time, from any other gate. They're often somewhat hidden, but should your health coil (hey, that's the Dreamcast logo!) run dry in the Spectral plain, you'll awaken in the game's first chamber and have to fight your way back. Once you've completed the game, which should take from 10-15 hours depending on your skill level, you will want to seek out all of the glyphs, which are concealed well within many arteries of Nosgoth.

The glyph levels add so much more to the overall Soul Reaver experience. I highly recommend seeking them out. Jump gates will aid you here tremendously. If you seek out the glyph's throughout the game, it's more rewarding (more time to revel in soul sucking, impaling, and exploding fledglings—extremely satisfying endeavors),

but it's hard to do, because you're always wanting to push on to the next conquest. As a reviewer with ten or so more games to play within a couple of weeks, I usually have to return to a game to reap its maximum benefits. I usually don't feel the need or desire to do so, but in this case I will return to Nosgoth to unlock 100 percent of its mystery. The ambience is that good.

Knowing how hard the Kain team worked to construct this complex and eerily captivating adventure (I can't imagine the bug testing between the two plains), I hate to even bring up the technical aspects of Soul Reaver, so I'll make this brief. The polygon muncher is once again along for the ride, nipping at your heels, causing textures in your immediate vicinity within tight corridors to jitter. But this is nothing new to PS owners, and there is fogging used to mask far distances; thankfully, these technical problems detract little from the game's gothic feel. The textures themselves are skillfully laid and the game's architecture is spectacular, more than making up for Soul Reaver's inherent miscues. The soundtrack is highly effective too, crawling up the back of your neck before hitting your ears. And, finally, I don't want to give too much away in terms of the evolution of the Kain legacy, but I will say that I found the ending short and unfulfilling—only in a good way. Probably because it's not really the end, I think. Make your own assumption when you get there. I highly recommend the journey. ⚡



► **GTA2, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34**

longer is the game made up of just roads, roads, and more roads. Now you have distinctive center of activity, from the slums, to the seaport, to the country outskirts.

As GTA 2's release date nears, all indications point to a successful and vastly entertaining sequel. Get ready to go breaking the law come October 22. **ラフ**



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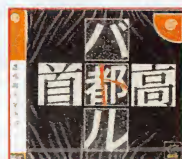
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GRANDIA

100		100
85		85
70		70
55		55
40		40
25		25
10		10



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Prepare yourselves for, among other things, one of the finest RPGs you will ever experience. GameArts' amazing polygonal RPG, *Grandia* (which originally appeared in '97 on the Sega Saturn in Japan) will finally see the light of day in America this winter. We'll have an in-depth preview for you in the November GR. But the fun doesn't stop there, oh no. In the next issue of Gamers' Republic we will proudly feature a GR-exclusive poster by none other than the Designers Republic, the UK design house from which our design staff get much of their inspiration. This one-of-a-kind poster won't be available anywhere else, so keep an eye out!

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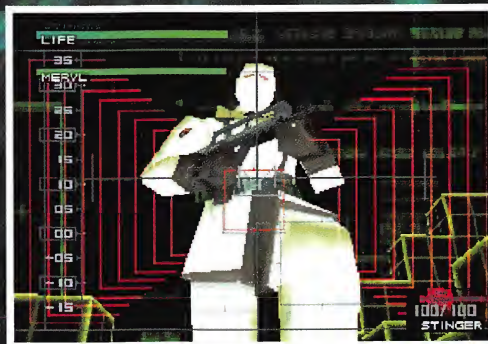
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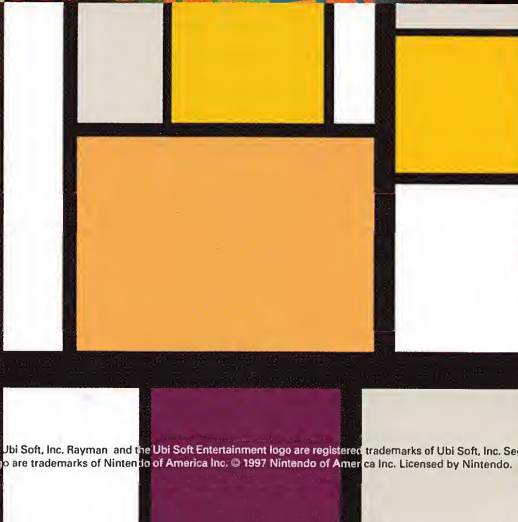
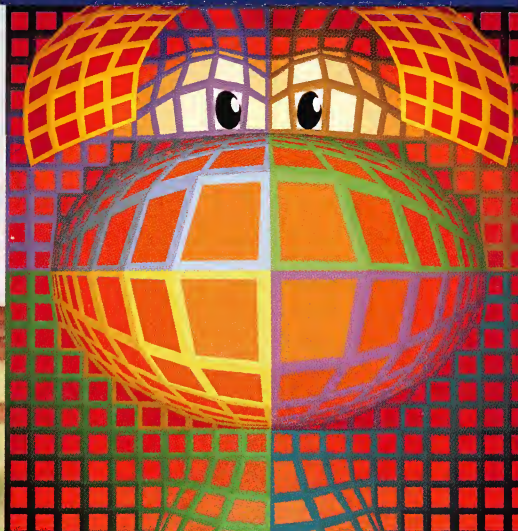


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